BRITISH ATTITUDES AND POLICY TOWARDS THE TAIPING REBELLION IN CHINA 1850 - 64

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A B S T R A C T

Part I surveys official attitudes and policy over the whole period of the rebellion. The main points developed are that the early policy of armed and limited neutrality was not significantly biassed in favour of either Manchus or Taipings, although official British opinion quickly came to discount the religious, political and commercial possibilities of the rebellion. By 1860 British neutrality was clearly inclined to favour the Manchus, especially after further treaty concessions had been forced from them by the war of 1856-60. But the idea that British policy changed quickly and decisively after that war is challenged, and it is pointed out that the intervention actually undertaken after 1862 was deliberately limited in extent and began in quite unpremeditated fashion. The main reason for the change in British policy is found in the official conviction that the rebellion was destructive of political order and therefore of the conditions for British trade in China, not in such things as fear of a strong, nationalist Taiping government which would prohibit the opium trade effectively.

Part II surveys the attitudes of unofficial groups. British merchants, it is suggested, were somewhat dubious in their first reactions to the rebellion, yet were divided

over the later policy of intervention, many considering this a dangerous provocation of a powerful movement which, up to 1862, had not seriously disrupted trade. British missionaries, although very hopeful and favourable towards the rebellion at first, always had considerable doubts about it. There was a renewal of missionary hopes about 1860-1, but closer observation led to almost total rejection by 1862, though, as with the merchants, many opposed intervention. There is no evidence that the merchants, still less the missionaries, decisively influenced the development of official policy. Other opinion on the rebellion is illustrated, the main point emerging being that there was much public debate about 1862-3 on the wisdom of the policy of intervention.

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INTRODUCTION

Although defeated by the government it challenged, the Taiping rebellion must certainly rank as one of the most important and remarkable movements of mass protest in modern history. Lasting for some fifteen years, it ranged from Kwangsi in the south of China to Tientsin in the north, from Szechuan in the west to Shanghai in the east, and involved, as European contemporaries were fond of observing, the destinies of nearly one-third of the human race. The Times once called it "the greatest revolution the world has yet seen. In mere magnitude it comprises a population equal to that of all Europe and all America put together."(1) Mere magnitude is not its chief claim upon the interest of the historian, however, but rather its significance as the first great attempt to adapt China to the revolutionary influence of the West.

The term "rebellion" disguises the fact that this was a revolutionary movement which, in programme at least, challenged many of the traditional values of Chinese society.(2)

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(1) The Times Aug. 30, 1853; cf. also J. Scarth, Twelve Years in China (1860), p.167 - "It is not a small matter with which we have to deal: it is the wonder of the age, and the destiny of millions is at stake".

(2) The term reflects the official Manchu view of the movement. Modern Chinese historians refer to it always as "ko-ming", i.e. a true revolution. It is indicative of the change in the British view of the movement that it was commonly called a "revolution" in early accounts, although not in official reports, but later "rebellion" became general, even among its sympathisers. I have continued to use the current English term, but not in any prejorative sense.

As a political revolt it was least revolutionary, insofar as its leaders still thought in terms of an imperial dynasty; but if not republican or democratic in the political sense, there was an element of modern nationalism in its appeal to the native Chinese to expel the foreign Manchu dynasty which had ruled China since the seventeenth century. The economic and social system projected in its early manifestos indicated a type of agrarian communism which looked back to a legendary golden age in Chinese history rather than forward to modern industrial communism, but in the later stages of the movement there were also proposals for the introduction of Western science and technology which suggest that some of the Taiping leaders at least were more alive to the need for far reaching changes in China than were their Manchu opponents. Other reforms proclaimed and in part applied included the promotion of equal status for women, the abolition of foot-binding, and the prohibition of prostitution and opium smoking. Finally, and to Western eyes most remarkable of all, the Taiping rebels attacked the traditional religious and Confucian teachings accepted by the Chinese people, and proclaimed instead an ideology based upon portions of the Christian scriptures which had become known to their leader, Hung Hsiu-ch'üan, through tracts distributed by Protestant Christian missionaries at Canton. Taiping Christianity proved to be anything but

orthodox by any Western standards, being distorted by the personal idiosyncracies of Hung and other leaders, as well as by a weight of Chinese tradition and belief which neither the Taipings nor later, more successful revolutionaries could entirely throw off. But the religious element in the rebellion, although of secondary interest to most later historians of the movement, naturally provoked great interest among contemporary Western observers.(1)

The Taiping rebellion, in short, was a confused and complex movement, half backward looking, half forward looking, which cannot be neatly fitted into any single category of description, whether Confucian, Christian or Marxist. But in a real sense it marks the beginning of the modern Chinese revolution, that long process of social, political and intellectual upheaval in which the Chinese people have struggled to re-organise themselves and their civilisation in terms both of the outside world which they can no longer ignore and of their own proud, inescapable past.

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(1) For accounts of the Taiping programme see: G. E. Taylor in Chinese Social & Political Science Review Vol. 16, 4 (Jan. 1933), pp.545-614; Y.C. Shih, "The Ideology of the Taiping Tien-kuo" in Sinologica vol. 3 (1953), pp.1-15, P. M. Linebarger et. al., Far Eastern Government and Politics (1954), c. 5; Teng Ssu-yü, New Light on the Taiping Rebellion (1950) cc. 4, 6, 7 etc.

This thesis is not directly concerned with the Taiping rebellion itself or with its place in Chinese history, but simply with the development of British policy and attitudes towards it. I have felt it necessary to give occasional brief summaries of its course, in order to provide a background of reference, but these are essentially incidental to the main subject. Part I of the thesis, based on the official Foreign Office records, aims to define the main lines in the development of British policy on the question, to analyse the nature of that policy, and to illustrate the kinds of opinion formed in official circles about the rebellion at various times in its history. Certain aspects of British policy towards the rebellion have already been a good deal written about, but only in works concerned primarily either with the rebellion itself, with Western and British relations with China generally, or with the exploits of "Chinese" Gordon and the so-called Ever Victorious Army which he led. There has been no attempt to examine the development of this policy over the whole course of the rebellion, or to present it as a distinct study in itself.

The years given most attention in existing accounts are 1853, when the rebellion first emerged as a political and military force capable of over-throwing the existing government in China, and those between 1861 and 1864, when the British

government abandoned its early stand of neutrality for one of active intervention on behalf of the Manchus. These are certainly the key years, and provide the inevitable focal points for any study of the question. But merely to fill in the gaps, to provide some account of the earliest official British reactions to the rebellion and to examine the actual working of the policy of neutrality between 1853 and 1860 has seemed worth doing, while the perspective thus provided helps to correct the impression gained from most existing accounts that British policy and opinion changed suddenly (many add, cynically) as soon as improved treaty relations with the Manchu government seemed to warrant it. What is presented here, in Part I, is essentially a general survey of the whole course of British policy towards the Taiping rebellion, which seeks to distinguish the main features of that policy but not to present a detailed account of every aspect of its working.(1)

As far as possible, I have set out to answer specific questions, these questions being posed mainly by the statements of other writers upon the subject. Chief among them, of course,

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(1) This is especially so in the case of the chapter on British intervention, many of the details of which have been exhaustively treated in accounts of Gordon's exploits. The thesis of W. Davies, British Diplomatic Relations with China (University of Wales, Swansea, readily obtained on inter-university loan) also gives a good summary of much of the detail of official British policy at that point, as does H.B.Morse, The International Relations of the Chinese Empire Vol.II (1918), cc.4 - 5.

is why British policy changed as it did, from early neutrality to later active intervention against the rebellion. At a very general level the answer to this question is fairly obvious and is agreed upon by both the defenders and the detractors of the British action. England intervened and helped put down the rebellion in defence of her trading interests and treaty rights, which were held to be threatened by the continuance of the rebellion. Some writers go on to add that this intervention was also in the best interests of China itself; but none really suggests that the main motive behind British intervention was other than commercial self interest. So Morse, the chief authority in English upon the subject, writing of the Western powers generally but certainly with England chiefly in mind,(1) has concluded that, from 1860,

> "in defence of their own interests, the Western powers were impelled more and more to intervene in the measures taken to suppress the rebellion and were driven from step to step in supporting the imperial government which, with

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(1) Throughout the thesis I have not hesitated to take general statements about "Western" policy towards the rebellion as being statements about British policy. England was far and away the dominant influence among western treaty powers in China at that time, and, on this question at least, it seems to me that the development of her policy can be appreciated without much reference to that of France or the U.S. There is, therefore, only occasional reference to the policies of these powers. For discussion of their policies see Tong Ling-tch'ouang, La politique francaise en Chine pendant les guerres des Taipings (thèse pour le doctorat, University of Paris, 1950); J.F.Cady, The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia (1954); T. Dennett, Americans in East Asia (1922)

"all its faults, was yet the power to which they were bound by treaties, and in resisting the rebels who brought only rapine and devastation in their train".(1)

The real question is why England came to regard the Taipings as a serious threat to her interests in China.

Modern Chinese historians, for the most part not sharing Morse's view of the rebels as bringing "only rapine and devastation in their train", but seeing them rather as the vanguard of their own revolutions, have offered more specific reasons for British hostility towards the movement. As one would expect, much emphasis is placed upon the Chinese struggle against Western imperialism. The Taipings are seen, especially by Chinese Marxist writers, as "complete patriots devoted to preserving the national resources", in contrast to the foreign, reactionary and corrupt Manchu dynasty which made the "unequal" treaties of 1842 and 1858-60 and opened the way into China to the Western imperialists.(2) Lo Erh-kang, the leading Chinese historian on the Taiping movement, has written,

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(1) Morse, op. cit. vol.II, p.65.

(2) See for example, (ed) Fan Wen-lan T'ai-p'ing T'ien-kuo ko-ming yün-tung lun-wen chi, p.50; Chang Chien-fu, Chung-kuo chin pai nien shih chiao-cheng pp 56, 62-3; and below, p viii.

"From the signing of the Treaty of Nanking China began to be transformed into a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society. But although the starting point for this great change is with the Treaty of Nanking, the real turning point is with the Treaties of Tientsin and Peking, which were concluded in the middle of the Taiping period. After the Manchu government had surrendered to the foreign invaders, and bound itself to them by these shameful (traitorous) treaties, the Taipings strongly opposed the foreign incursions. So the foreign invaders decided to support the Manchu government and, by openly participating in the struggle, cruelly strangled the Taiping revolution. In these exceptional times the Taipings preserved the honour of the Chinese people and protected their resources, carrying on an unflinching struggle against the foreign invader."(1)

Putting aside the question how far the Taipings can be said to have played such a role, the main point with which I shall be concerned is whether or not the British authorities in China at that time saw them in this way. Did British policy aim to crush the emerging nationalism of the Chinese people?

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(1) Lo Erh-kang, T'ai-p'ing T'ien-kuo shih-kao, p.160.

Were the Taipings regarded as extreme nationalists who would withold, on grounds of political principle, the concessions forced from the Manchus? Was British policy designed to uphold a "weak" and pliable Manchu government for fear of a "strong", intractable Taiping government?(1)

A second major reason given for British hostility which is emphasised by many historians, both Chinese and non-Chinese, Marxist and non-Marxist, is the Taiping prohibition of opium smoking. Given the importance of the opium trade to British merchants trading with China, and of the revenue derived from it by the British government in India, the prohibition of opium would have been the equivalent of a death sentence, says Fan Wen-lan, and was the basic reason for England's leading the Western opposition to the rebellion.(2) Whereas the Manchu government agreed to legalise the trade in opium by the Treaty of Tientsin, the Taipings continued to oppose it, so that "Englishmen began to realise that co-operation with the Taipings was impossible", says Hsieh Hsing-yao.(3) Questions which

(1) W. Eberhard, History of China (1950) p.311, says that the European powers "preferred the weak Manchu government to a strong Taiping government", and the same suggestion is implied if not so directly stated, by many other writers as a reason for their intervention.

(2) Fan Wen-lan, T'ai-p'ing T'ien-kuo yün-tung, p.30; also his Chung-kuo chin-tai shih, vol. I, p.124.

(3) Hsieh Hsing-yao, T'ai-p'ing T'ien-kuo ts'ung-shu shih san chung, Tseh 1, p.20 (Hung-Yang 1 Wen); also his T'ai-p'ing T'ien-kuo shih-shih lun-ts'ung, p.243. For other examples of the argument from opium see (ed) Fan Wen-lan, op.cit., pp.39-40; A.F.Lindley Ti-ping Tien-kwoh (1866), vol.II, p.555; J.K.Fairbank and M.Banno, Japanese Studies of Modern China (1955) p.49, etc.

arise from this explanation include just how dangerous to the opium trade and revenue the Taiping prohibition was believed to be, and whether there is any direct evidence of pressure being exerted, either by the opium merchants or by the British government in India, in favour of intervention against the rebellion. To argue that the opium trade was very important to England, the Taipings prohibited opium smoking but the Manchus did not, therefore England helped the Manchus against the Taipings may be good logic, but it is not necessarily good history.

Certain other reasons which are given for the development of British hostility towards the rebellion may be more briefly noted. Lo Erh-kang has suggested that England was fearful of the influence of the Taipings throughout Asia generally, and has called the Indian Mutiny "without doubt an echo of the Taiping revolution".(1) Although at first sight this appears to be a case of seeing mid-nineteenth century history very much in mid-twentieth century terms, it is worth asking nevertheless whether Taiping rebellion and Indian Mutiny were in any

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(1) Lo Erh-kang, op. cit., p.174. The Russian historian M. I. Baranovsky in an article in the Soviet periodical Voprosui Historii for January, 1952, entitled "Anglo-American Capitalists - the Stiflers of the Taiping Rising", has argued similarly (pp 106-7, 109, 114).

way connected in the minds of British officials concerned with policy in China. The American historian W. J. Hail has also speculated whether an offer of aid made by the Russians to the Manchu government at the end of 1860 "did not have something to do with (England's) change of front". The usually accepted commercial motive was, Hail suggests, possibly reinforced by "an even more powerful political motive, namely, a desire to prevent the Russians from securing the Yangtse trade which Great Britain regarded chiefly as her prerogative".(1) It is necessary to ask, therefore, whether the change in British policy was prompted by a desire to prevent other powers, especially Russia, from gaining predominant political or commercial influence in China through helping the Manchus. Finally, subsidiary reasons given by one or two writers are dislike of the heretical tendencies in Taiping Christianity, and dislike also of "the socialistic element in many of the measures adopted by the Taiping".(2)

Direct discussion of the nature of the change in British policy and the reason for it is left until the last two chapters of Part I. The main questions with which the chapters preced-

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(1) W. J. Hail, Tseng Kuo-fan and the Taiping Rebellion (1927) pp 228-9; also Holger Cahill, A Yankee Adventurer (1930) pp 285-6.

(2) W. Eberhard, op.cit., p 311; Hsieh Hsing-yao, op.cit., (..lun -ts'ung), p 244.

ing these are concerned are, first, what kind of neutrality was it that England adopted in the early stages of the rebellion, and second, when exactly was the change in her policy made? Was it, indeed, "made" at all? Did British policy develop in the sure and calculated way suggested in nearly all accounts of it, or in some less certain, more complex fashion? The almost universally accepted argument that England had "no sooner" concluded a new and satisfactory treaty settlement with the Manchu government in 1860 than her policy towards the rebellion changed, certainly suggests a band of policy makers who knew exactly where they wanted to go, and had no hesitation in setting out.(1) The trend of British policy immediately after the conclusion of the treaties of 1858-60 is, therefore, given particular emphasis. As for the question of British neutrality after 1853, the argument, put forward mainly by Marxist historians, that this neutrality was never true or sincere at all is examined.(2) For this it is necessary to ask what is meant by neutrality in the first place, what the British government meant by it in this particular case, and whether the policy it proclaimed in 1853 was really intended

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(1) For examples of this argument see below, chapter 4; note also the article of J.R.Levenson, "Western Powers and Chinese Revolutions: the Pattern of Intervention", in Pacific Affairs vol 26, 3 (Sept.1953) pp230-6, which illustrates the view of British intervention as a calculated, nicely planned policy. This is, of course, also the Marxist view of it.

(2) For examples of this argument see Fan Wen-lan, op.cit. (..chin -tai shih)p 123; (ed) Fan Wen-lan, op.cit. (..lun-wen chi)

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as "a screen for the Manchus" until such time as England was ready to help crush the rebellion.

The thesis does not attempt to discuss in any detail the relative importance of British intervention in the final defeat of the rebellion. To answer that question adequately it would be necessary to examine the general condition of the rebel movement in its later years, and also the Manchu campaign against it, both issues beyond the scope of the material used here. That material is relevant in some measure to this question, insofar as it illustrates the actual extent of British action against the rebellion, and it seems to me to reinforce the view that British and other Western intervention was neither so extensive nor so decisive as some have made it. But the main questions asked about British policy here are more limited in scope, being part of an attempt to describe that policy on the basis of the official British records, rather than of an attempt to assess its place in the general history of the Taiping rebellion.(1)

Part II of the thesis may be more briefly introduced. In it I have attempted to give a general picture of non-official

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pp 42-3; Lo Erh-kang, op.cit., p168; Hu Sheng, Imperialism and Chinese Politics, p.42; M.N.Roy, Revolution and Counter Revolution in China (1946), pp 154-5; A.F.Lindley, op.cit., p 174; J.Scarth, British Policy in China (1861),p27.

(1) this page...
For discussion of this question see W.J.Hail, op.cit.,ch.12; also G.E.Taylor, op.cit., p.613.

opinion about the rebellion and also about British policy towards it, both in China and in England. Apart from the obvious problem of defining and illustrating the various attitudes to be found among missionaries and merchants, in the press and in parliament, the major question I have in mind in this part is whether the development of the official policy was at any point significantly influenced by non-official opinion. Did missionary disappointment in the "heresies" of the Taipings lead them to urge a sort of Albigensian crusade upon the British government? If British policy was designed to protect British trade interests, especially the opium trade, did British merchants, especially the opium merchants, urge a policy of intervention upon their government?

This part of the thesis is based upon a variety of sources, unfortunately not very evenly spread. There are very adequate records from which a comprehensive picture of missionary opinion can be obtained, but the available merchant records relevant to the question are much more piecemeal. Nevertheless, it is possible to say something about merchant opinion, especially on the question of intervention, which is the main point of interest. Press files and parliamentary debates also make possible some analysis of that uncertain thing, "public opinion", so that, although the main emphasis in the thesis is upon the development of official policy and attitudes, some place is

given to the attitudes of other interested groups. For the most part, the state of opinion in these groups has been generalised about on the basis of a few isolated examples, or simply assumed. The chapters in Part II of the thesis are therefore designed as much as anything to bring together as representative a selection as possible of merchant, missionary and other views, both upon the rebellion itself and upon government policy towards it.

On the problem of presentation, although division into two separate parts has its disadvantages, I have felt that, given the difficulties involved in weaving together a comprehensive picture from a wide variety of sources, both official and non-official, concerned with policies and opinions in England and in China, it is justified for the sake of clarity. In transcribing Chinese personal names I have used the Wade system, and for Chinese place names the old Post Office system. —— Neither of these systems was established at the time with which the thesis deals, so that in quoting original documents the spelling is sometimes different from that in the text. As a rule this presents no difficulty (Taeping for Taiping; Shanghae for Shanghai, etc.); but in the few cases in which confusion might arise I have put the modern English spelling in brackets. I have referred throughout to "the Manchu government" rather than to "the Chinese government", out of

respect for the view that the Taipings were the real representatives of the Chinese people, but I have not hesitated to refer to "Chinese officials" or "Chinese authorities", since these were usually in fact of Chinese race, even though serving a Manchu government.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge help in preparing the thesis from a number of quarters - from the Central Research Fund of the University of London for a grant of £20 with which to purchase from the U. S. A. a microfilm copy of files of the North China Herald (1850-61), unavailable in England;(1) from Dr. J. C.Ch'en and Mrs. Hung-Ying Bryan for assistance with translations from Chinese materials; from Mr. J. Lust, librarian at S. O. A. S., for translation of the article in Russian referred to on ppXn1,269n2; to the various missionary societies in London who so readily made records available to me, and to their librarians, especially Miss Fletcher of the London Missionary Society, for their assistance in using these; to Mr.

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(1) Unfortunately, although ordered early in December, 1956, and re-ordered in February, this microfilm has still (early April) not yet arrived. For the views of this important newspaper I have therefore been obliged to rely on quotations in other contemporary newspapers, and in later historical works, and on occasional cuttings from it enclosed in the volumes of China despatches in the Public Record Office. The British Museum file of this paper begins at 1862 and is, in any case, at present withdrawn from the use of students. The R.I.I.A. has a file beginning in 1863. The microfilm of the years 1850-61, when it arrives, will be placed in the University of London Library.

J. Gerson for permission to use his notes made from the correspondence of Lord Elgin at Broomhall, Dumfermline, Scotland, to which he wasgiven access by Lord Bruce, and also for much helpful discussion; and to both my supervisors, Mr. O. P. N. B. van der Sprenkel and Mr. J. Gray, for their suggestions, advice and encouragement.

PART I: OFFICIAL ATTITUDES and POLICY

CHAPTER I

British Relations with the Manchu Government and Early Reactions to the Rebellion (1850-2)

Existing accounts of British policy towards the Taiping rebellion begin with the situation as it was in 1853, although the rebellion itself actually began in 1850. This is natural enough, since until the middle of 1852 the rebellion was confined to the hinterland of China's two southernmost provinces, Kwangsi and Kwangtung, an area remote from the capital at Peking and from the main centre of British trade in China around Shanghai.(1) Nothing that can properly be called British policy towards it can be defined before the advance of the rebels to the Yangtze valley and their capture of Nanking, the second city of the empire, in March, 1853.

Even before then, however, certain opinions about the character of the movement had been formed by British officials in China, on the basis of the few, vague reports they received

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(1) Actually about 1850 British trade at Shanghai was still less than at Canton, but the consul there could assert with confidence that "The advantage enjoyed by this Port over every other in China, not excepting Canton, must be too evident to require comment". (F.O.228/130, Alcock to Bonham, March 12, 1851). In 1852 Consular returns of trade at the two ports (as given in a table in the Shanghai Almanac for 1855) showed :

Canton ...	£2,368,830	Imports	£1,566,614 Exports
Shanghai .	£1,566,614	"	£2,141,845 "

Within a few years trade at Shanghai far outstripped that of any other treaty port in China. See figures quoted in P.D. vol 174 col 1534, where total foreign trade at Shanghai about 1863 was given as £58 million against Canton £6 million.

of its progress in Kwangsi, while very definite opinions about the character of the Manchu government which was being challenged had also been formed by these officials, on the basis of ten years experience of treaty relations with it. The first question which arises is how far British officials concerned with the making of policy in China were predisposed to favour the rebellion when it first emerged as a force of major importance.

In 1853 the British government quickly decided upon a policy of neutrality. Although many Marxist historians argue that this neutrality was always inclined towards the Manchus, some other historians suggest that, in the beginning at least, it tended to favour the rebels rather than otherwise.(1) The major reason given for this latter view is that British sympathy for the movement was aroused by the rebels' profession of Christianity, but also suggested as a powerful factor working in the rebels' favour is that there was a great deal of dissatisfaction felt with the Manchu government on account of its attitude towards treaty relations with the West.

"The rebel conquest of the Yangtze valley occurred at a time when British and American officials were becoming exasperated by the conduct of the Manchu officials, who

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(1) See for example Morse, op.cit., vol I p 453; T.Dennett op. cit. pp 216-20; W.Costin, Great Britain and China (1937) pp 160-1; Maybon and Fredet, Histoire de la Concession Francaise de Changhai (1929) pp 48-53.

"sought to evade observance of the treaties of 1842-4, particularly as they applied to the opening of trade", writes E. P. Boardman. "Favourable reports that reached Shanghai of the vigor and discipline of the insurgents and the Christian character of their religious beliefs indicated that more co-operation might be expected from them than from Ch'ing officials".(1)

The idea of the overthrow of the Manchu government, it is suggested, was by no means unacceptable to British and other western officials in China in 1853.

There is certainly a great deal of force in this argument, for there can be no question that relations with the Manchu government under the Treaty of Nanking, signed in 1842, had proved very unsatisfactory from the British point of view. Before that treaty, contact with China had been confined to Canton, the only port opened by the Manchus to western trade. The provincial authorities there had, according to long established Chinese principles, treated all westerners as "barbarians" who needed to be "soothed and curbed" and with whom relations could only be conducted on a tributary basis.

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(1) E. P. Boardman, Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion (1952), p 20; also Maybon and Fredet, op. cit., pp 51-2.

Diplomatic equality was simply a principle which Chinese governments had never recognised. No communications from British or other Western officials were accepted unless labelled as "humble petitions" and presented, not directly to the governor in his yamen, but to lesser officials at the city gate. All westerners were confined to a factory area outside the city proper, which they were forbidden to enter, and were subject to many irritating restrictions and regulations. Altogether, from both a trading and a diplomatic point of view, the situation was highly unsatisfactory to the Westerm powers in China, which meant primarily England, since her trading interests were by far the greatest. Only a trickle of trade was being drawn, on hands and knees, from what seemed in all logic the greatest potential market and reservoir of human wealth in the world. The seizure of stocks of opium by the authorities at Canton in 1839 became the occasion, although it was hardly the real cause, for the first Anglo-Chinese war of 1839-42.(1)

On paper, and up to a point in fact, the Treaty of Nanking which resulted from that war radically altered the situation. Four additional coastal ports (Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo and Shanghai) were opened to trade, and British subjects were guaranteed the right to reside at them, "without molestation

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(1) On Western status in China before the Treaty of Nanking see especially J.K.Fairbank, Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast (1953), cc. 1-3.

or restraint", while British officials were to be free to correspond directly with Chinese officials, at the capital and in the provinces, "on a footing of perfect equality", under such terms as "Communication", "Statement" or "Declaration". In addition, the island of Hong Kong was ceded, to provide a secure base for British vessels in China waters, and an indemnity, both for the opium destroyed in 1839 and the expenses incurred in the war by the British government, was exacted. The first of the "unequal" treaties was intended by England to open a new era in its relations with China.(1)

By the Manchu government, however, this treaty was regarded not as the beginning of a new era but merely as the end of a disagreeable episode. A brief diplomatic honeymoon between the actual negotiators of the treaty, Ch'i Ying and Sir Henry Pottinger, was followed by renewed frictions and many "incidents", especially at Canton, so that the conditions for a second Anglo-Chinese war were soon in process of creation. The reasons and stages of this breakdown of the first treaty system have been analysed at length elsewhere.(2) Sufficient here to note the long wrangle over the right of British subjects to enter Canton;

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(1) For texts of this and other treaties quoted or referred to below see Treaties, Conventions, etc., between China and Foreign States (Imperial Maritime Customs, Miscellaneous Series, No.30, Shanghai 1908-9).

(2) See Fairbank, op.cit., cc 15-19; Costin, op.cit., c.3; Morse op.cit. vol I c.14.

the refusal of the governor of that city after 1848, Yeh Ming ch'en, to accord recognition to the British consul, Dr. John Bowring, by meeting him; the triumph of the anti-foreign party in court circles after the accession of the Hsien Feng emperor in March, 1850, a triumph marked especially by the degradation of Ch'i Ying, the chief representative of a moderate approach on the Chinese side; and, most important, the rejection of an attempt by Palmerston ih 1850 to bypass the unco-operative Canton officials by communicating directly with the "Minister of Foreign Affairs" in Peking. After this last rebuff Palmerston began to rumble of war, in his best John Bull fashion, telling the British Superintendent of Trade in China and Governor of Hong Kong, Sir George Bonham, that

> "the time is fast coming when we shall be obliged to strike another blow in China..... These half-civilized Governments, such as those of China, Portugal, Spanish America, all require a dressing every eight or ten years to keep them in order ...."(1)

The Treaty of Nanking had obviously wrought no great revolution in the attitude of the Manchu government towards relations with the West, and apart from access to four new ports, of which only

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(1) Cit. Costin, pp 149-50; for still earlier anticipation of the possibility of a second war see Chinese Repository, Dec. 1845.

Shanghai gave firm promise of becoming a major market for foreign trade, the British position in China seemed to have advanced little from what it had been before 1842. Official, as well as non-official, British dissatisfaction with this state of affairs was certainly very great by 1850.

At the same time, the limits to the lengths England was prepared to go in its exasperation with the Manchu government should also be recognised. In 1840, Captain Elliot, chief British representative in China at the time of the outbreak of the first Anglo-Chinese war, had warned against a too vigorous attack, lest this bring about the collapse of the dynasty. "I can't conceive a more unfortunate consequence to ourselves than extensive political convulsion in China", he observed.(1) With that sentiment he expressed one of the great principles underlying British policy in China throughout the period of this study and beyond, namely, to prevent the political break up of the country and thereby the creation of a situation in which England would either have to govern in order to trade, or not trade at all - unless under difficult and dangerous circumstances. Fear that this was an all too probable result of the Taiping rebellion tended to inhibit official British sympathy towards it from the start.

"I should be sorry to see any coercive measures resorted to at this juncture", Bonham wrote to a Foreign Office

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(1) Ibid, p.78

official in December, 1851, in a letter discussing general relations with China, "inasmuch as such a measure might throw the whole of the Two Kwangs (Kwangsi and Kwangtung) into a confusion from which it might be very difficult to extract them; and it is clear that such a state of things could not be conducive to our interests".(1)

In a despatch written in February, 1853, as the Taipings were advancing down the Yangtze towards Nanking, the consul at Shanghai, Rutherford Alcock, expressed his doubts of their ability to displace the Manchus quickly and effectively.

"A long inter-necine war, with the total destruction of the Empire, seems a more probable and disastrous issue. Disastrous alike to the prosperity of the Country and the maintenance of any permanent commercial relations on the part of Foreign powers."(2)

Certainly, this was written before any definite reports of the Christian beliefs and the discipline of the rebels had been received, and Alcock was, in any case, always more of an alarmist than Bonham. Yet it remains true, as later chapters will show, that even in the periods when the rebellion seemed most irresistible, and the collapse of the Manchu government most likely, leading British officials in China were never really convinced of the rebels' capacity to establish their

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(1) F.O.17/181 Bonham to Hammond. Dec. 29, 1851.
(2) F.O.228/161 Alcock to Bonham, Feb. 26, 1852.

authority quickly over the whole of China, or even the greater part of it. They had real grounds of complaint against the Manchu government, but it was always preferable to a state of political chaos. Any sympathy they might feel for the Taipings on religious or other grounds was conditional upon the speed and thoroughness with which the rebels seized the Dragon Throne and received the Mandate of Heaven.

The natural bias in British policy away from the idea of political change in China was accentuated in the years immediately preceding 1853 by a temporary change in the general direction of that policy. Political changes in England meant that Palmerston left the Foreign Office at the end of 1851 and was replaced by men less inclined to favour a vigorous foreign policy, in China or elsewhere. The development of major issues in Europe itself, notably the establishment of the Second Empire in France and the emergence of the crisis with Russia over the Middle East, meant that insofar as China affairs received attention the emphasis was upon keeping things quiet. Talk of war ceased, and although an improvement in the British situation was still to be sought, it was to be by negotiation for treaty revision, not by "another Blow".

This change in the temper of the British government towards China affairs is revealed by the instructions sent to Bowring, when he was appointed acting Superintendent of British Trade at

Hong Kong during Bonham's absence on leave between April, 1852, and February, 1853. Bowring, after his experiences at Canton, was probably more exasperated with the Manchu government than any other British official in China; and being, in addition, a political protegé of Palmerston - if one may use such a word of so proud a man - he was anxious to force the issues. But during his temporary direction of affairs he was more than once instructed to avoid any sort of forceful policy, and to confine his actions "to keeping everything, both as regards intercourse with the Chinese, and the details of Consular business, as quiet as possible".(1) Obliged to put aside his plans to transform British relations with China, Bowring was thoroughly irked.

> "My orders to do nothing and not to quit Hong Kong have been most peremptory, and precious opportunities have been lost", he complained in a personal letter to Lord Granville in November, 1852. "...But as Sir George Bonham writes to me that both the present and the late governments consider the existing state of things by no means unsatisfactory, and that he fully concurs in that opinion, my hopes of doing any good in China have vanished, and I trust that on

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(1) A & P 1857 (2173) p 12, Malmesbury to Bowring, July 21, 1852; cf. also ibid p 3, Granville to Bowring, Jan. 19, 1852.

Sir George Bonham's assumption of office some other field may be found for me, and that I may be allowed to return home - at all events that a twelve months leave of absence may be granted me ...."(1)

Bowring got his leave of absence, returning to China as Sir John in April, 1854, to succeed Bonham with full powers at Hong Kong, and of course with renewed hopes of being able, this time, to pursue a more vigorous policy towards the Manchu government.

Yet the instructions issued to him in 1852 represented more than a temporary détente, brought on by his care-taker status at that time. This is indicated by the instructions he received at the beginning of 1854. Clarendon, who was Foreign Secretary by then, instructed him to

"endeavour to maintain the most friendly intercourse with the Chinese Authorities, and while steadily upholding the rights and privileges secured for British subjects under Treaty, you will as far as possible avoid occasions of angry discussion calculated to lead to an interruption of friendly relations between this country and China."(2)

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(1) F.O.17/207 Bowring to Granville, Nov. 24, 1852.

(2) F.O.17/210 Clarendon to Bowring, Feb. 13, 1854.

In thus urging Bowring to keep the peace in China, Clarendon was no doubt thinking partly of the approaching crisis in the Middle East, but he also went on to summarise the past ten years of treaty relations with the Manchus in such a way as to suggest that he was far from feeling that it was impossible to treat with them. He authorised Bowring to raise the question of treaty revision, but added,

> "If we have not yet reaped all the advantages which were anticipated, at the conclusion of our Treaties with China, from the intended intercourse with that country for which it was the object of those Treaties to provide, it is nevertheless unquestionable that the commerce of Her Majesty's subjects in that quarter has made rapid progress under the protection of those Treaties, and there is therefore good reason to expect that by prudent management commerce may be still further developed, and our intercourse with the Chinese Authorities and people set free from those obstacles which have hitherto beset it. So far indeed from it being a matter of surprise that more has not been done, it is a subject for congratulation that such results have already been secured, notwithstanding the difficulties of no ordinary character with which we have had to contend....There were habits of long standing to be overcome, prejudices deeply rooted to be

softened down, new marts for Trade to be established, new arrangements to be made for meeting the demands of the Foreign Merchant for the produce of the Soil. And it cannot be doubted that much of the disappointment which has been felt at the limited expansion of our intercourse with China since the conclusion of the Treaties has originated in a disregard of these conditions."(1)

The emphasis was upon continued negotiation with the Manchu government, and there was no suggestion of encouragement to the rebels as being likely to prove more co-operative.

It would be foolish to attempt to try to argue away the existence of official British impatience and exasperation with the Manchu government about 1853, but it is important not to assume that this was strong enough to dispose British policy favourably towards the idea of revolution in China. After Palmerston's departure at the end of 1851, this impatience was for a time much less apparent in the Foreign Office itself, which was the final arbiter of British policy in China. The difficulties which had been experienced in applying the 1842 treaty did, of course, prompt the question whether things would not be better from the British point of view under a Taiping government. But the answer of British officials to this questio was from the start much less decidedly affirmative, and much

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(1) F.O. 17/210 Clarendon to Bowring, Feb. 13, 1854.

less ready to assume ultimate rebel success, than was that given by many non-official observers. British officials were at least as much disposed to ask whether it would not be possible to improve the British situation in China as the price of aid to the Manchu government. They were certainly not a priori in favour of the idea of rebellion in China; not even Christian rebellion.

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Turning to the question of official British opinion about the rebellion before 1853, one sees the view of it that was to predominate in later consular despatches in process of formation. The image seen through a glass darkly during 1850-2 became, after a relatively short period of doubt and speculation, the picture of the rebellion painted in ever sharper colours and fuller detail in most later consular reports.

The assembling of the members of the Pai Shang-ti Hui (God Worshippers' Society) at the village of Chin T'ien in Kwangsi in the middle of 1850 may be taken as the starting point of the rebellion, although it was not until January 1851, that Hung Hsiu-ch'üan assumed the title of Tien Wang (Celestial King) and proclaimed the Taiping Tienkuo (Celestial Kingdom of Great Peace). He then instituted a new dynastic calendar, thus, as it were, formally challenging the ruling dynasty, and appointed

five subsidiary Wangs to advise and assist him in the government of his new empire. Despite these large pretensions, however, until the middle of 1852 the rebellion remained confined to the interior of Kwangsi and Kwangtung, an area pocketed off from the rest of China by the Nanling mountains and an ineffective base for a national revolution, as Sun Yat-sen was also later to find. In June, 1852, therefore, partly to advance their claims and partly to avoid the harrying troops of the provincial government, the rebels began to move northward through Hunan, growing in numbers and strength as impoverished peasants joined them, and reached the Yangtze by the beginning of 1853.(1)

During the Kwangsi period of the rebellion no first-hand reports about it from Western observers were received, and British officials were dependent for what information they got upon rumours, second-hand reports, "the common newsman", and reports in the official Peking gazette. On the basis of such sources of information, or mis-information, the British consulate at Canton sent fairly regular reports to the Superintendency at Hong Kong, copies of which were generally sent on to London. But Bonham emphasized "how imperfectly we are informed of important events occurring in our immediate vicinity", at the

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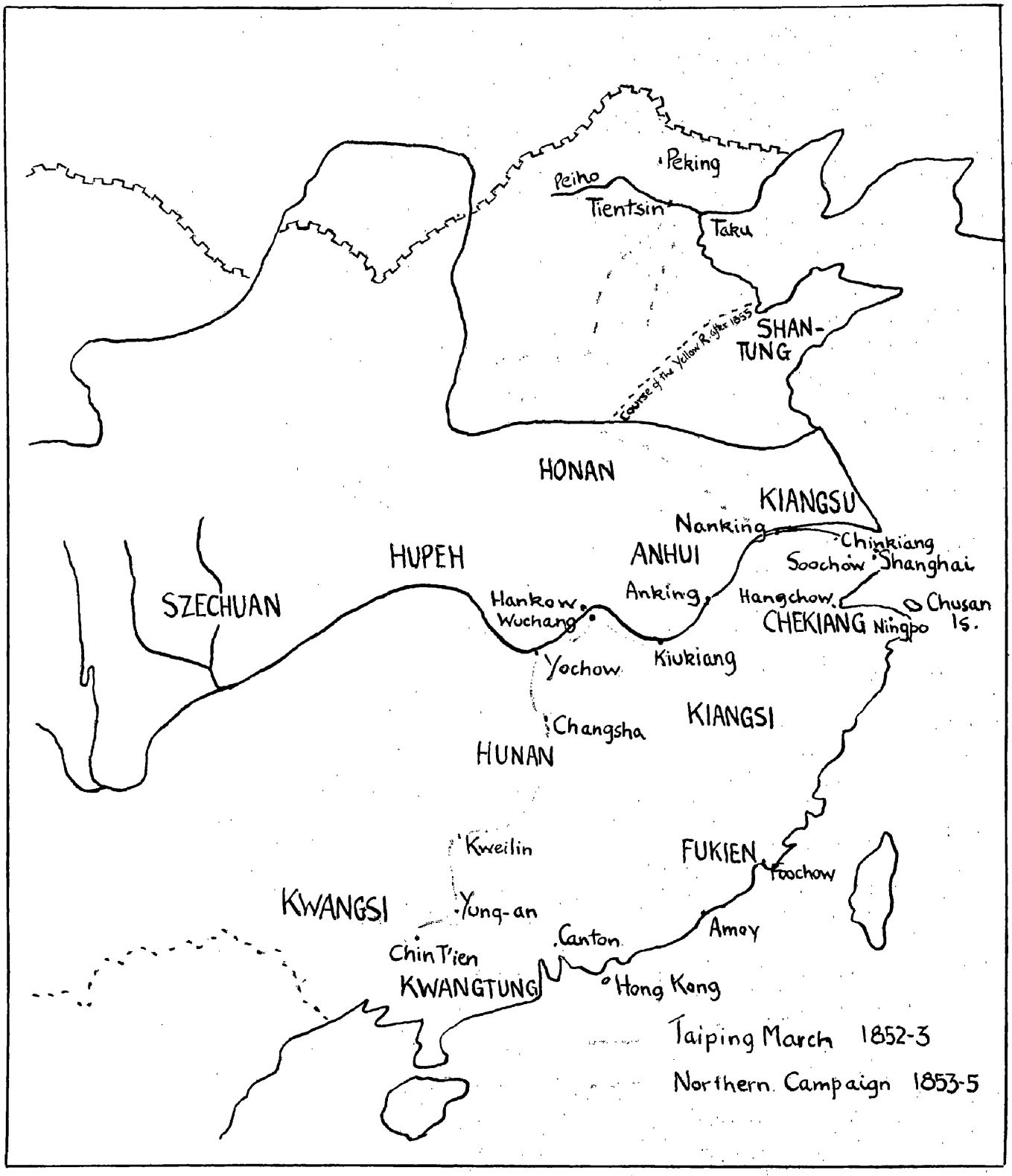
(1) This and other summaries of the course of the rebellion is based mainly on (ed) A.W.Hummel, Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1943).

CHINA and the TAIPINGS 1850-5.



same time warning the Foreign Office that "incidents which are even here, in my judgment, magnified, may attain a formidable growth by the time they are repeated in England".(1) From these reports, and the comments of Bonham and later Bowring upon them, three main questions emerge as occupying the minds of British authorities in China about the rebellion at this stage. Given the lack of accurate sources of information, none was easy to answer with certainty, but this did not prevent fairly decided views being formed.

The first and basic question was whether the rising should be regarded as a serious political revolt or simply as a big-scale bandit movement. The first reports from Canton, written in August, 1850, by T. T. Meadows, Interpreter to the consulate, referred simply to "rebels or robbers" defying the authorities in Kwangsi for some months past. Bonham, forwarding copies of these reports to the Foreign Office, gave his opinion that "plunder and not the overthrow of this Dynasty seems to me to be the <u>real</u> motive of the Rebellion".(2) A few months later, in noting reports of the capture and dispersion of many "banditti" near Canton, he expressed himself strengthened in his belief that "there never has been adequate ground for

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(1) F.O.17/169 Bonham to Palmerston Sept. 28, 1850.

(2) ibid, August 23, 1850, enc. Meadows' report of Aug. 16.

investing their incursions with the title of insurrection.

> "No person of respectability has joined them, and it is the habit of such marauders, as from Chinese history it would appear always to have been, to endeavour to lure the disaffected to their side by the assumption of rank, display of badges and banners, and similar artifices."(1)

Bowring also, when relieving Bonham during 1852, referred to these "rather predatory than political movements", and was inclined to argue that, politically, the Manchu government was far less weak than it might appear.(2)

The most forceful, if not the most prescient, expression of this tendency to discount the political and military significance of the rising was given by the Hong Kong paper China Mail, in February 1851, when it presented views that it never really abandoned, despite the later successes of the rebels.

> "From the first we have regarded the "rebels" as nothing more than freebooters, who attempt to conceal their real character under an imposing pretence of patriotism, and whose actual force has been greatly exaggerated by the authorities who have failed to disperse them. The pretence however, in both cases...has been mistaken for the reality, and we have accordingly been favoured, both from Europe and India, with sapient and solemn disquisitions on the "Civil

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(1) F.O.17/170 Bonham to Palmerston, Oc. 29, 1850

(2) F.O.17/188 Bowring to Granville, April 23, 1852; also May 5th

> "War in China", and the approaching overthrow of the present dynasty by an organized host, already mustering in one distant and unimportant province, double the number of armed men the Duke of Wellington led to Waterloo!"

The fighting, the Mail concluded, would probably end in "amicable negotiations", Chinese fashion.(1)

It was partly in answer to such views that Meadows, as early as June, 1851, reported his conviction that the rebellion was a serious and organized political movement. Like the China Mail, he held to his point of view during the later history of the rebellion, even when he was practically the only representative of the British government in China to speak in its support. In 1851 he wrote of the rebels,

> "They levy contributions according to established rules, and pay for their supplies where the contributions in kind are not sufficient; they are at some care not to make themselves obnoxious to the lower classes, and even occasionally share with the poor what they take from the rich; their object is to go on in this manner gradually increasing their funds and recruiting their numbers from the disaffected until they deem themselves sufficiently numerous for permanent occupation of the cities they take;

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(1) China Mail Feb. 27, 1851

"they never hesitate to engage (and almost always signally defeat) any bodies of the Imperialists that interfere seriously with the prosecution of these immediate objects, but for the present they do not seek to fight; lastly, while they give no quarter to volunteers or to mandarins that go out of the strict line of their duty to act against them, they are far from sanguinary in their treatment of regulars who fall into their hands while merely obeying orders.

"I conceive that men who seem to have on the whole consistently kept in view these objects and rules for a whole year, and whose aggregate numbers are never given at <u>less</u> that 20,000 cannot, without plain perversion of language, be termed "robbers"..... That the Imperial Government considers the affair nothing less than what we would call a rebellion, and a very serious rebellion, is made sufficiently plain by the measures it is taking..."(1)

But Meadows' very sympathetic view of the rebellion was not shared by his superiors in 1851 any more than in 1861, when he was still writing in its defence.

A secondquestion which was asked at this time concerned the religious nature of the movement. In 1853, when authentic

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(1) F.O.17/178, enc. in Bonham to Palmerston, June 21, 1851.

information was obtained on this point, there was naturally great astonishment, not to say delight, at the sudden emergence of a native movement of rebellion proclaiming the Christian faith. Yet something of this was certainly suspected, although not fully realized, before 1853. In September 1851 Meadows reported that an Imperial Edict had been issued which attributed the disturbances to "Strange Doctrines". "No mention is made of Christianity", he noted, "but it is evidently included in the term 'Strange Doctrines'"(1) Bowring, however, was convinced that the movement was no more genuinely religious than it was political,

> "It is not surprising that the progress of the insurrection has been attributed to foreign influences and the teaching of the missionaries," he wrote in May 1852. "...Reports reached me some time ago that Christian inscriptions had been seen upon the banners of the Insurgants. Some of the Protestant missionaries accused the native Catholic Christians of being prime movers of the revolt, while on the other hand the Catholic missionaries declared that the chief who had adopted the title of 天德 Tien Tih, or Celestial Virtue, was a teacher converted by and connected with Dr. Gutzlaff, and one of the active members

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(1) F.O.17/180, enc. in Bonham to Palmerston, Sept. 29, 1851; cf. also Chinese Repository July-Nov., 1851, pp 497-8 - "There is a very general impression in Canton and its vicinity that they are somehow connected with foreigners and with Christianity..."

"of the Doctor's great missionary machine known by the name of the Chinese Christian Mission.[1] Some time ago it was reported that the rebels were destroying the heathen temples and were calling themselves worshippers of Shangtè, the name which one section of the Protestant missionaries give to the true God. On this news reaching Hong Kong the Protestant missionaries sent two agents into Kwangse in order to report on the real state of things. Though the agents soon got frightened and ran away from the disturbed districts, I am informed by Dr. Legge that the rebels were Idolaters still, and that though they had demolished certain temples belonging to Deities whom they did not patronize, yet the Shangti whom they worshipped was not the Christian Shangti (Sovereign Ruler) but an Idol representing the God of War - and that the Mother of Heaven - a female idol very popular among the Chinese, shared the Idolatrous devotion of the Insurgents. It has been said that one of the banners bore the inscription of 天主 Tien Choo, which is the name for God adopted by

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(1) Karl Gutzlaff was a German missionary who, after working for some years as Interpreter to the British authorities at Canton, organised the Chinese Evangelical Union. This body was intended by Gutzlaff to bring about the conversion of China by sowing the seed broadcast by means of itinerant preachers and Chinese agents, rather than by working out from a few bases as most missionary societies attempted. Gutzlaff was responsible for influencing a number of missionaries in going to China, including Hung's teacher, I.J.Roberts. See "Karl Gutzlaff: als missionar in China (1946) Herman Schlyter (copy in the library of the L.M.S.).

> "the Catholic Missionaries, but I believe that there are no grounds for the report, nor can I learn from any authentic source that the movement has anything whatever of a religious character."

Nor did it represent a serious political threat to the dynasty, Bowring insisted, and altogether it had "far more of a local than a national character". As such, he added, "It does not affect, nor is it likely to affect us, except by interfering with the regular course of trade, and the probability is, even were any of the five ports menaced, of which at present there are no symptoms whatever, that there would be no meddling with the persons or property of Foreign residents".(1)

The conclusion of this despatch indicated the third point of interest to British officials in the early reports on the rebellion, namely, how it might affect British interests in China. In 1850-1 Bonham had expressed occasional fears for the security of Canton and the fate of trade there, but by 1852, as Bowring's despatch shows, no great alarm was felt for the treaty ports. On the contrary, there was a tendency to see the outbreak of rebellion as a possible advantage, since as an embarrassment to the Manchu government it might perhaps be used as a lever with which to extract full observance of the Nanking treaty, and even treaty revision. So Bonham, despite

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(1) F.O.17/189 Bowring to Granville, May 5, 1852.

his warning at the end of 1851 against throwing the Two Kwangs into confusion, was writing only a couple of months later that

> "the present time is as favourable for coercing the Chinese Government as the reign of Taukwang, because although the reigning Emperor is less friendly than his Father, his hands are full of the Kwangse Rebellion, and his Exchequer emptied by the same cause".(1)

Bowring also thought the rebellion provided a good opportunity to press the question of entry into Canton, for

> "the Mandarins, menaced by Insurrectionists in the neighbouring provindes and desirous, above all, to maintain the public peace and to come into no collision with powerful foreign nations would, I think, consent to our admission, could they only be persuaded that the demand was seriously made, and would, in case of resistance, be enforced".(2)

But, between the reluctance of the Foreign Office after Palmerston's departure to encourage such moves and the sudden change in the course of the rebellion itself, these early speculations came to nothing. In any case, the danger remained that if British policy attempted to use the rebellion as a lever to prise open a wider door into China it might in fact help to bring the

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(1) F.O.17/187 Bonham to Palmerston, Kan. 29, 1852.

(2) A & P 1857 (2173) p 4, Bowring to Granville, April 19, 1852.

whole structure down. As an instrument of British policy the rebellion was decidedly awkward to handle, and was never successfully used, either as a means of getting treaty revision or, in its last years, as a means of injecting greater efficiency into the Manchu government.

The views formed by British officials about the rebellion in its Kwangsi period cannot, I think, be said to have had any very significant influence upon the trend of British policy in 1853. They may, perhaps, have helped incline it for a short time towards intervention at a price on behalf of the Manchus, but by the middle of the year the success of the rebellion was so great, and the first-hand reports upon its character and organisation so remarkable, that it was obviously necessary to rethink the official attitude. By the middle of 1854, however, these early views had, in essentials, re-asserted themselves. The rebellion was once again written off in most official British reports as of no real political or religious worth, even though it remained militarily formidable, and the brief period in which more sympathetic and hopeful views of it were entertained soon passed. In any case, the sympathy and the hope were always very qualified.

CHAPTER II

The Policy of Neutrality (1853)

While the rebellion was confined to the far south of China British representatives were in the position of interested spectators who were not seeing much of the game. The Foreign Office itself did not display any interest, and made no comments. But once the rebels began to move down the Yangtze valley, approaching Nanking, and, even more important in British eyes, the tea and silk districts around Shanghai, the case was very different. The desire to discover more about the rebels increased, while some definite statement of the official British attitude towards their movement became essential, especially when Chinese officials began requesting the aid of foreign vessels to check their advance.

The primary objectives of British policy in China at that time were to secure full recognition of the treaty rights gained in 1842 and, if possible, to extend these to include direct diplomatic access to the court at Peking and the right to trade in the interior as well as on the coast. Policy towards the now serious rebellion had to be fitted into this general pattern of British policy in China, but in the absence of certain knowledge about the rebels and their attitude to

foreigners, and in the prevailing atmosphere of political and military insecurity, this was not easy to do with any confidence. Would the larger ends of British policy be best served by helping the Manchu government to suppress the rebellion, by treating with the rebels as a new de facto power, or by holding strictly aloof and awaiting the outcome of the struggle? Since it then took from three to four months for despatches from China to reach London and instructions in reply to be received, while events in China itself were moving very swiftly, the responsibility for the early definition of British policy necessarily rested upon Bonham as Chief Superintendent of Trade at Hong Kong. He soon decided upon the last course as the best from the British point of view, but certainly did not ignore the other alternatives altogether. In particular, intervention on behalf of the Manchu government was for a short time seriously considered.

The chief advocate of this line of policy was the consul at Shanghai, Rutherford Alcock. As early as November, 1852, he had been anticipating that foreign consuls there might soon have to treat with "authorities de facto in the absence of those representing the Emperor Hienfung".(1) His despatches to Bonham at the beginning of 1853 defined the possible dangers

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(1) F.O. 228/148 Alcock to Bowring, Nov. 1, 1852.

and advantages that he saw in the situation. By January more certain reports of the advance of the rebels towards Nanking and the coast had been received at Shanghai, "with what result to our commercial and political relations it is scarcely safe to predict", Alcock wrote, "Of course if they bring in their train obstinate civil war, interrupting the traffic in the great trunk lines and accompanied with much disorder and disorganization, both political and social, it may be very fatal. If, on the other hand, they continue the precautions hitherto reported to have been taken to establish order, it may be a mere change of rulers in which, at first at least, we may not be very directly concerned".(1)

In a despatch dated February 26th, Alcock felt that the fall of the dynasty was by then nearly certain, but also that later reports of the erratic and destructive nature of the advance of the rebels made it very doubtful that they could effectively replace the Manchus, and he began to express fears for the future of foreign trade in China. Since the Chinese authorities at Shanghai were already asking for the assistance of foreign vessels, however, Alcock was quick to ask

"whether France, in the interests of the Propaganda and Roman Catholicism, or Great Britain in the interests of a

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(1) F.O.228/161 Alcock to Bowring, Jan. 24, 1853.

"Commerce involving in its circle some £25,000,000 of capital and an annual revenue (British and Indian) of some £9,000,000,[1] may deem the occasion opportune for rescuing the Empire from a threatened disintegration, and largely advancing the field of exertion by securing as the condition unrestricted access to the furthest confines.....in a confidential note of this nature I may perhaps be permitted to urge upon Your Excellency's attention how critical are the circumstances - how easily and certainly England with threat from steamers and men of war might fling a sheathed sword into the balance with decisive effect, and dictate her own terms. And finally, that it appears to me from all the information that reaches me, no longer limited to a question whether our interests may be advanced by armed mediation or intervention, but rather whether without some such step promptly and decisively taken these interests - Commerce and Revenue - may not be utterly ruined by a state of anarchy and political disorganization - which it may be in our power by a timely act to avert".[2]

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(1) For figures on trade in China in this period see Appendix B. In the early eighteen-fifties the Government in England collected £5 - 6 million p.a. in tea duty (about 2/- a lb.), and the British government in India £3½-4 million p.a. from the opium trade. For tea revenue see A & P 1872, vol LIV (c.204), (Account showing Quantity of Tea Annually Consumed in the U.K. with Aggregate Amount of Duty Collected thereon ...); for opium revenue see table in F.S.Turner, British Opium Policy and its Results to India and China (1876) p306. (cit below p 416.)

(2) F.O.228/161 Alcock to Bonham, Feb. 26, 1853.

A few days later, on March 3rd, he was urging the point even more strongly, insisting that the time had come, "and no one may safely predict how soon the opportunity may pass away", for the Foreign powers together or for Britain alone to secure from the Emperor, "while he is yet in a position to make treaties", such long desired concessions as unlimited access to the interior and to all the ports on the coast, direct relations with Pekin and the legalization of the opium trade - all to be had within two months.(1)

So rugged an imperialist as Alcock was quite untroubled by scruples about putting pressure on a "friendly" power in difficulties.

> "It certainly in this view does not enter into my conception that Her Majesty's Government would under any circumstances pledge themselves to an intervention either unconditional as to the fruit, or unrestricted as to the extent or nature of the aid to be rendered, " he continued, in his despatch of March 3rd."Scruples as to the ungenerosity of taking advantages of the distress of a friendly power could scarcely find place in dealing with the Emperor of China, whose indisposition to carry out the provisions of existing Treaties in their spirit has been very evident".

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(1) ibid, March 3rd, 1853.

"Even while I write", Alcock concluded on a note of near panic, "it is confidently reported that Nankin has fallen.....(and) at the bare supposition of Nankin being taken, trade is at a stop. If the news prove true.....I can only repeat the intimation conveyed in my last confidential - namely, that I look upon the pillage of the place and of the Foreign settlement here as all but inevitable".

As he admitted in these despatches, Alcock was making suggestions on issues of policy "which do not strictly fall within the province of a Consul to discuss". They are of considerable significance in this study however, for they had a marked influence on Bonham, only just returned from leave to Hong Kong, and set him thinking in terms of a policy towards the rebellion based on the principle of aid to the Manchus in return for trading and diplomatic concessions. In forwarding a copy of Alcock's report of February 26th to the Foreign Office Bonham commented that the views it contained were "on the whole entitled to weighty consideration", and asked for the advice of the home government, "particularly to what extent if assistance were given, it should be granted".(1) Next day, March 11th, having received Alcock's despatch of the 3rd, Bonham reported his intention to go north to Shanghai himself, so as to be able "in the event of matters coming to a crisis, to take more

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(1) F.O.17/200 Bonham to Malmesbury, March 10, 1853.

"decisive steps for the protection of the trade and interests of British subjects than Her Majesty's Consul could be expected to undertake".[1] Alcock was clearly sympathetic to the requests for aid he had received from the Shanghai authorities, but had not taken it upon himself to promise it definitely. Bonham assured the Foreign Secretary, by this time Clarendon, although Bonham was still addressing himself to Malmesbury, that he would exercise the greatest prudence, and not proffer aid too readily.

> "I shall not accede to any application for assistance unless that application is made directly by a High and properly accredited Functionary", he added, "and not even then without making that assistance the condition of advantages to our commerce in China".

But on paper at least, intervention appeared to be a real possibility.

Bonham left for Shanghai on March 12th in the gunboat "Hermes". Once arrived, however, he quickly dropped all idea of offering aid on any terms at all. In the same despatch in which he reported his arrival he reported also his determination,

> "pending the instructions of Her Majesty's Government, not to interfere in any shape in favour of the Chinese Government, as I feel confident that any such interference

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(1) ibid, March 11, 1853.

> "on my part could only prolong the struggle, though in the first place it might appear to have a totally different result".(1)

It is worth examining the reasons why Bonham came so quickly round to a policy of neutrality, for he had clearly been impressed by Alcock's assessment of the possible advantages in the situation for British interests in China.

The fall of Nanking and the evidence this provided of the strength of the rebel tide was certainly, as Lo Erh-kang argues, a major reason for Bonham's change of approach. At the same time, it seems to me that Lo exaggerates the extent to which Bonham had actually moved in the direction of offering aid to the Imperialists, when he goes on to argue that the news of the fall of Nanking and of the death of the Imperial viceroy, Lu Chien-ying, with whom Bonham had hoped to negotiate,

> "completely upset the plans of the foreign aggressors and obliged Bonham to abandon for the time being the counter-revolutionary agreement that he was just beginning to form with the Manchus".(2)

On this argument, a policy of neutrality was forced upon Bonham as a sort of temporary second-best. The corollary, which

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(1) A & P 1852-3 (1667) p 1, Bonham to Russell, March 28,1853.

(2) Lo Erh-kang, op.cit., pp 161-2.

Lo goes on to draw, is that it was never a sincere policy but always pro-Manchu in inclination, whatever it might be on paper. But this assumes too readily that Bonham was firmly set upon the path of intervention before the news of the fall of Nanking reached him.

That this was the drift of Bonham's early search for a policy is beyond dispute; that he was ever likely to arrive at the point of trying to implement such a policy is rather more doubtful. For one thing, Bonham was not an official who relished making the big decisions himself, and he frequently expressed his anxiety to receive precise instructions from the home government.(1) He was prepared to talk with Chinese officials about aid but not necessarily to commit himself to a policy of immediate and active aid. Further, he seems to have been more alive than was Alcock to the fact that no provincial authority was likely to be very willing, even in such a crisis as that of March, 1853, to memorialise in favour of trading large concessions to the barbarian in return for aid

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(1) Costin, op.cit., pp 152-3 notes the existence of rather cool relations between Bonham and Bowring, the "activité dévorante" and readiness to take rapid and decisive action of the latter being rather much for the Chief Superintendent; Morse, op. cit. vol I pp 393-4 illustrates Bonham's disapproval of Alcock's vigorous action in blocking the Chinese grain ships at Shanghai in 1848 in order to force satisfaction for attacks on three English missionaries; Fairbank, op.cit., pp 426-7, says Bonham "ducked responsibility" during the customs crisis at Shanghai in 1853. Apart from his cautious temperament

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against the rebel.(1) To use the barbarian to suppress the rebel was certainly in the best traditions of Chinese policy, but not to pay a stiff price first - though it sometimes happened that the barbarian exacted a stiff price afterwards. Bonham, by nature much more cautious than Alcock, took a calmer view of the situation, both as to its dangers and its possibilities.(2) It is, I think, something of an exaggeration to argue as if Bonham was forced against his will to adopt a policy of neutrality.

The argument is difficult to clinch satisfactorily because Bonham wrote no despatches himself between March 11th, when he was certainly thinking about intervention, and March 28th, when he adopted a firmly neutral stand. Also, unlike Alcock or Bowring, he was not given to lengthy exposition or analysis in his despatches, so that the official record gives no very clear evidence about the development of his thought on the

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continued from previous page.. Bonham's position, being close to retirement from the consular service, was thought by the French minister in China at the time, Bourboulon, to have influenced him in favour of a "bystander" role. See Costin, p.161 and Tong Ling-tch'ouang, op.cit., p.23.

(1 this page.. See, for example, Bonham's Comments upon Alcock's suggestion to press for the legalisation of the opium trade in F.O.228/161 Bonham to Alcock (Draft) Feb. 22, 1853.

(2) For Bonham's discounting of the danger to Shanghai see his letter to the S.N.O. at Hong Kong asking for the use of the "Hermes", F.O.17/200, enc. 2 in Bonham to Malmesbury, March 11th,1853. In his report of March 28, from Shanghai, he spoke of the next move of the Taipings as "an interesting subject for speculation", not one for alarm.

matter during these crucial weeks.[1] There is also the problem of where exactly you find "British policy" at any given moment. Lo writes as if Alcock's despatches were statements of a settled British policy, but in fact they were no more than vigorous arguments in favour of a certain line of policy. Admittedly Bonham was ready to test this line to the extent of negotiation with high Chinese officials, but Clarendon, who was Foreign Secretary by the time copies of Alcock's despatches arrived in London, gave it no encouragement and instructed Bonham, in a despatch dated May 7th, that

> "Her Majesty's Government are of the opinion that the most just and prudent course under the existing circumstances is that they should observe a strict neutrality between the contending parties, should abstain from taking

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(1) It would seem that Meadows' report of March 26, in which he stated that he was convinced that "the insurrectionary movement is a national one of the Chinese against the continued rule, or rather misrule of the Manchoos", and that foreign interference "would now only have the effect of prolonging hostilities and anarchy for an indefinite period" had much influence on Bonham's report of March 28. Bonham echoed Meadows' views on the probable effect of intervention, though not on the national character of the movement. (See A & P 1852-3 (1667) pp 1, 5.) Alcock, it may be added, reversed his ideas on the advisability of intervention. In August he wrote, "I do not think there can have been two opinions since Nanking fell into the hands of the insurgents as to the impossibility of any judicious intefvention on the part of the Foreign Powers, and the existence of an imperative obligation to observe an absolute and unequivocal neutrality. My opinion individually on such a matter of national polity is, of course, very unimportant...." (See F.O.228/161 Alcock to Bonham, August 6, 1853).

"any part whatever in the dissentions now prevailing, and should not interfere for the settlement of the question in dispute".(1)

This was written three weeks before Bonham's despatch of March 28th was received, although telegraph news of the fall of Nanking had reached London at the end of April. The Foreign Office, as distinct from the consul at Shanghai and the Chief Superintendent of Trade at Hong Kong, does not seem to have seriously considered the idea of intervention in the early stages of the rebellion.(2)

But the Foreign Office was a long way off and some kind of policy had to be applied on the spot before its views could

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(1) F.O.17/198 Clarendon to Bonham, May 7, 1853. Fairbank, op.cit., p 414, notes that it was June before this despatch was actually sent, pending overtures to the U.S. and France on taking advantage of the situation to raise the issue of treaty revision again. But on May 20, in the H.of C., Russell stated in reply to a question what course the government proposed to follow, that non-interference beyond the protection of British lives and property had been ordered. (See P.D. vol 127, cols.436-7).

(2) The suggestion made to other governments by the F.O. for taking advantage of the crisis does not seem to me to weaken this argument. Certainly this was couched in vague terms ("to take such course as may be calculated to turn to best account the opportunity afforded by the present crisis for opening the Chinese Empire generally to the commercial enterprize of all the civilised nations of the world"), but there was no direct suggestion of offering aid to the Manchu government. On these proposals, which for the time came to nothing, see F.O.27/957 Clarendon to Lord Cowley (ambassador in Paris) May 17, 1853; F.O. 5/561 Clarendon to Crampton (ambassador in Washington) May 20 and June 30, 1853, and esp. F.O.5/565 Crampton to Clarendon, June 13, 1853; also J.F.Cady, op. cit., pp 109-14.

be known, Had Bonham committed British forces against the rebels in March, 1853, this might have become, by the inexorable logic of events, and despite the opinions of Her Majesty's Government, the official British policy. That this did not happen is to be explained not simply by the pressure of external events upon Bonham, important though these undoubtedly were, but also by the fact that his own personality and past experience of Chinese affairs limited the extent to which he was likely to follow Alcock's lead. In any case, the rebel success at Nanking was a great deal less positively disturbing to Bonham or the British government than Lo's whole argument assumes.

The neutral line adopted by Bonham at the end of March became the settled British policy towards the rebellion, on paper at least, for nearly ten years. Bonham adopted it in the first instance "pending the instructions of Her Majesty's Government", but in the following months it was confirmed and strengthened both by his own actions in China and by instructions received from London. Clarendon, as already noted, recommended a policy of neutrality even before he received the despatch of March 28th, and when that despatch was received (May 30th) he approved Bonham's decision as being "in entire conformity with the wishes and intentions" of the government.(1) Before this approval could reach him, Bonham himself had been at some pains

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(1) A & P 1852-3 (1667) pp 6-7 Clarendon to Bonham May 31, 1853.

to make this policy plain to both sides, as well as to British subjects in China. His most important step in this direction was his visit to the rebels at Nanking in the "Hermes" at the end of April.

The rebels, as Bonham had anticipated, had made no attempt to advance as far as Shanghai after their capture of Nanking. At the end of March they had captured Chinkiang, on the junction of the Grand Canal and the Yangtze river over a hundred miles from the coast, but for the time being were content simply to hold the Imperialist forces which besieged them there. At the beginning of April large Imperialist forces under Hsiang Jung established the "Great Camp of Kiangnan" from which a siege of Nanking itself was directed and maintained, after a fashion and with one major interruption, for over seven years. In 1853 the rebels consolidated their gains in the lower Yangtze basin short of the actual coastline, at the same time sending off part of their forces to the north and west.

Politically, their northern campaign was of vital importance, for it represented their most direct thrust at Peking, the capture of which was essential if they were to over-throw the Manchus entirely. Although the forces sent north reached the neighbourhood of Tientsin, within striking distance of the capital, their eventual destruction was perhaps the real turning point in the fortunes of the rebellion. The rebels were still

to win great victories, especially during 1860-2, but their threat to the throne was never again so immediate, nor their chances of complete political and military success so great as in the early stages of their northern campaign. In the west opposition to the Taiping advance centred around the Chinese official Tseng Kuo-fan, who, despite defeats which sometimes reduced him to despair, slowly built up the provincial armies which were to be the main agents in the final defeat of the rebellion. The failure of the rebels to establish themselves on the coast by taking Shanghai, which they could probably have done without difficulty in the middle of 1853, despite the besieging Imperial forces at Nanking and Chinkiang, was doubtless a major strategic error, for it denied them easy access to the Western arms and supplies which were to become an increasingly important element in the struggle, as well as to a valuable source of revenue from the customs duties of the port. But none of this was apparent when Bonham made his journey up the river at the end of April, 1853. For the Western powers the important thing was that the rebel advance had stopped short of Shanghai.

This meant, however, that the rebels remained very much an unknown quantity still. Attempts made early in April to get accurate first-hand information about them, first by Chinese messengers and then by Meadows attempting a journey in secret through the Imperialist lines at Chinkiang, did not yield much.

> "There is a somewhat strange peculiarity distinguishing these insurgents", Bonham noted. "The accounts received from Mr. Meadows describe them as Puritanical and even fanatic. The whole army pray regularly before meals. They punish rape, adultery and opium-smoking with death, and tobacco smoking with the bamboo....." But, he added, he was "by no means satisfied in regard to the intentions of the insurgents towards foreigners, and as the former appear to be a more formidable body than has hitherto been supposed, I am unwilling to rest until I shall have obtained a declaration of those intentions".(1)

Further, although he had refused the repeated requests of the Shanghai authorities for aid, giving an "invariable reply... that we were determined to remain perfectly neutral", this had not prevented the taotai (prefect) of the city, Wu Chien-chang, putting out propaganda reports that such aid was in fact being given. The two objectives of the trip therefore were "to undeceive the insurgents in regard to the false statements made by the Shanghae Taoutae", and to find out what the rebellion was really like.

There are a number of accounts of the "Hermes" visit to Nanking, and it would serve little purpose to recount it in any detail here.(2) What matters is the view formed by Bonham

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(1) Ibid., p.16, Bonham to Clarendon, April 22, 1853.
(2) See A & P 1852-3 (1667); T.T.Meadows, The Chinese and their Rebellions (1856) pp 251- ; E.G.Fishbourne, Impressions of China and the Present Revolution (1855); L.Brine, The Taeping Rebellion in China, (1862).

about the movement and whether the policy of neutrality he had laid down in March was given a pro - or anti - Taiping bias as a result of it. Bonham was certainly less favourably impressed than Meadows, who went as chief interpreter, or than Captain Fishbourne, who commanded the "Hermes", but the tone of his reports to Clarendon was sceptical rather than hostile.(1) He was at some pains to show that the firing from rebel batteries to which the "Hermes" was subjected as it approached both Chinkiang and Nanking was understandably due to the false reports put out by Wu, and that it ceased when the "Hermes" made no reply. Once arrived at Nanking, he assured the rebel leaders of British neutrality, but also reminded them in no uncertain terms of British rights under the treaty of 1842, threatening that

> "if you or any other people presume to injure in any manner the persons or property of British subjects, immediate steps will be taken to resent the injury in the same manner as similar injuries were resented ten years ago....."

This was provoked by evidence that the rebels, though they spoke of Westerners as their "brethren", and not as "barbarians", were still far from abandoning the old Chinese assumptions of

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(1) For Bonham's reports on which the following account is based see A & P 1852-3 (1667) pp 21-35.

superiority towards "tribute bearing" nations. "The sooner the minds of these men are disabused in regard to their universal supremacy the better for all parties", Bonham commented to Clarendon. But in 1853 there seemed no reason to regard the Taipings as likely to prove more difficult to deal with on this account than the Manchus had already proved. On the contrary, it seemed reasonable to argue, as did Meadows, that their greater readiness to assimilate Western ideas in religion meant that such prejudices were likely to disappear more quickly among them than among the Manchus. Thus, thought Meadows, "with their success a totally unhoped for prospect would open to us of obtaining, by purely amicable means, complete freedom of commercial action throughout the whole of the Chinese empire".(1) Bonham himself did not express such high hopes immediately after his trip to Nanking, but a few months later he was saying something similar in a report to Clarendon.(2)

Bonham's innate caution and scepticism were most apparent in his comments on the religious ideology of the movement, and on its prospects for complete success. Of the former, he wrote

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(1) T. T. Meadows, op. cit., p 280; see also his report in the North China Herald May 7, 1853.

(2) See below p 51 .

> "they have established a new religion which may be called a kind of spurious revelation. The base of this structure is supposed to be founded upon the Old Testament and religious tracts; but they have superadded thereto a tissue of superstition and nonsense which makes an unprejudiced party almost doubt whether there is any real sincerity in their faith, or whether it is not used merely as a political engine of power by the Chiefs to sway the minds of those whom they are anxious to attach to their cause".

As to their military prospects and chances of ultimate success Bonham did not commit himself, but warned against speculation, "as so much depends upon circumstances with which we are not at all familiar". He anticipated that the next rebel advance would be towards Peking, not Shanghai, but noted the existence of still powerful Imperial forces around Nanking. There was no thought of offering aid to the rebels, nor did the Taipings seriously ask for it, being flushed with victory and confident that "Our Heavenly Father helps us, and no one can fight with Him". It would, indeed, have been contrary to all English ideas of international law to have aided any rebels against a power with whom treaty relations existed, even such unsatisfactory relations as those with the Manchu Government at that

time. Some observers, in fact, thought Bonham went too far in even visiting Nanking, at least in person, since this might be taken to imply a sort of de facto recognition, but Clarendon fully approved his proceedings. His journey had served to provide much valuable and remarkable information about the rebellion. It also served to confirm in his own mind the wisdom of a policy of strict and watchful neutrality, for it was still not plain which side would triumph nor which was really the more likely to serve British interests in China.

This policy was given more general application by Bonham after he left Shanghai in the middle of May, convinced by then that the crisis at that port was safely past. On his way back to Hong Kong he called at Amoy, which had recently been captured by rebels belonging to a secret society independent of the Taiping movement. Having satisfied himself that they offered no serious threat to British lives or property in the port he instructed the British vice-consul there to maintain strict neutrality, though he anticipated an early recapture by the Imperialists.(1) Back in Hong Kong, reports were received from Canton expressing fears of renewed rebel outbreaks, and there were indirect enquiries from the Chinese authorities about the possibility of British aid. These, Bonham assured

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(1) F.O.17/201 Bonham to Clarendon, May 28, 1853.

Clarendon, he would certainly reject, adding that he looked with some anxiety for the views of the Government "not only on this particular question, but on the whole subject relative to the state of affairs in this country".(1) Thus the policy of neutrality determined on at Shanghai was extended during the latter part of May to cover the whole revolutionary situation that was developing in southern China under the stimulus of Taiping successes. It was also explicitly applied to all British subjects in China by a proclamation on July 7th warning them against engaging in the conflict as being contrary to both statutory and common law.(2) The whole object of Bonham's policy at this stage was to avoid becoming compromised in any way, whether officially or by the irresponsible actions of British nationals on the China coast, so that, whichever side ultimately triumphed, British treaty rights might not suffer.

Certain features of this policy of neutrality are worth noting before examining its working in practice. As Bonham's warning to the rebel chiefs indicated, the neutrality adopted was distinctly an armed neutrality ready to "resent" any injury to British interests in China. The difficulty was to determine

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(1) F.O.17/202 Bonham to Clarendon, June 7, 1853.

(2) F.O.17/203 enc. in Bonham to Clarendon, July 22, 1853; also China Mail, July 14, 1853.

how far British forces should be used to defend those interests. In response to a query from Bonham on this point Clarendon thought it impossible to lay down any general rule. At Amoy, where Clarendon believed there was no distinct area within which British interests were concentrated,(1) protection could not be provided indefinitely, and the consul should advise British merchants that they must either withdraw or stay at their own risk. But at Shanghai, which proved to be the chief case in point, the situation was different.

> "There the factory is distinct from the Town and I believe, more easily defensible," Clarendon wrote. "There also British Residents are more numerous, and the amount of property much larger; and at Shanghai, therefore, Her Majesty's Government would wish a concentration of Naval Force and the immediate chastisement of the party in power from whom any injury is received".(2)

At Canton, roughly the same situation obtained. Where possible it was the foreign settlement areas, or "factories", which, as the focal points of British persons and property, were to be defended against both sides. These were to be placed outside

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(1) Actually the foreign community was concentrated on the island of Kulangsu in the harbour. See Fairbank, op.cit. pp 156-7.

(2) For Bonham's query dated Sept. 21, 1853, see F.O.17/204, and for Clarendon's reply, dated Nov.24, 1853, see F.O. 228/153.

the field of conflict between the rebels and the Manchu Government.

But these areas were legally still Chinese territory. At Shanghai the British concession or "factory", later to become known as the International Settlement, was leased in the first instance by the British consul from the local Chinese authorities on payment of an annual ground rent. An area of 23 acres set apart for a consulate in 1843 was later extended to 120 acres in 1846 and to 460 acres in November 1848.(1) This lease of a distinct area of land close to the river front on which British subjects might build their residences and warehouses provided a convenient arrangement both for the British community, soon joined by other Westerners with the exception of the French, who leased their own concession, and for the local Chinese authorities, who had no desire to see the foreigners established within the Chinese city. But the land was not leased in the way that, for example, part of the Kowloon area opposite Hong Kong was leased in 1898, that is by an agreement between governments transferring sovereignty for the period of the lease from one to the other. In the latter case the British government acquired a clear right in

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(1) On growth of the settlement see Morse, op. cit., vol I c.18 and vol II c.6, and Hsia Ching-lin Studies in Chinese Diplomatic History (1926) 49-50.

international law to defend the leased territory against any attack, but no such right can be said to have existed in the case of the foreign settlement areas at the treaty ports. England's "right" to defend them was based primarily on her capacity to do so as a power militarily stronger than either of the two combatants in the civil war. Under the terms of the 1842 Treaty of Nanking British subjects acquired a right to reside at the treaty ports but not necessarily a right to reside within areas specially set apart for them, while the British government cannot be said to have acquired any clear right by that treaty to use its forces to maintain virtually independent control over such areas, or to forbid Chinese forces and authorities access to them.(1)

Yet however presumptuous and however questionable its basis in law, this policy of armed and limited neutrality was recognizably a policy of neutrality of some sort. The essence of neutrality in international law is impartiality in action. It does not preclude sympathy with one side as against the other, nor even the right to intervene if a belligerent violates a principle of international law.(2) Putting aside the consid-

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(1) On the very peculiar legal status of these foreign settlements areas, especially at Shanghai, see Hsia Ching-lin, op.cit., c 2; F.C.Jones Shanghai and Tientsin (1940) c 2. L.Oppenheim International Law (7th edn H.Lauterpacht), vol I p 456-7 n.8, distinguishes these "somewhat peculiar leases" from the usual kinds of divided sovereignty recognised in international law.

For Note (2) see next page.....

erable complications that, in the first place, neither the Manchu government nor the Taiping rebels would have admitted themselves to be bound by any Western inspired principles of international law, and that, in the second place, in the mid-nineteenth century there was no kind of international authority such as exists today to which England might have appealed to uphold her treaty rights in China, both sides in the civil war, and certainly the Manchu government itself, can be said to have had a belligerent right to occupy the foreign settlement areas if necessary for the success of their campaigns. So long as British subjects were not molested such action would not, strictly speaking, have constituted a violation of British treaty rights. But so long as the British government refused to allow either side to make use of the settlement area then its stand, although perhaps not strictly legal, was not inconsistent in practice with a declaration of neutrality. It was very much a mid-nineteenth century, strong power type of neutrality, capable of defending what it alone determined were the proper limits of its "rights" in China, and determined to do so.

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(2) from previous page..
"Since neutrality is an attitude of impartiality, it excludes such assitance and succour to one of the belligerents as is detrimental to the other, and, further, such injuries to the one as benefit the other....(it) is not incompatible with sympathy with one belligerent and disapproval of the other, so long as these feelings do not find expression in actions violating impartiality....Again (it)..does not compel (neutrals) to remain inactive when a belligerent in carrying on hostilities violates the rules of International Law". (L.Oppenheim, op.cit., vol II p654-5, also ibid pp 659-6 and G.H.Hackworth Digest of International Law vol VII pp 434-4, 348,352.)

It was not, in the beginning, a neutrality which masked a decided preference for one side or the other. Such a preference, in favour of the Imperialists, soon revealed itself, but was not apparent during 1853. At the end of May Bonham instructed Alcock to avoid all unnecessary communication with the Taipings and to "rigidly abstain from any act by which the Chinese Government could be led to believe that the British Government gives any countenance to the Insurgents, or indeed feel any interest in their success".(1) But this concern to avoid becoming associated with the rebels too closely is an illustration of Bonham's caution rather than of any hostility towards them. In fact, in conversations he had with the French and United States representatives in China at the beginning of August he expressed qualified hopes in the Taipings, in contrast to both de Bourboulon and Colonel Marshall, who made no secret of their preference for the Imperialists.(2)

(1) F.O.228/161 Bonham to Alcock (Draft) May 30, 1853.
(2) Bonham reported of Bourboulon that "he did not disguise from me that he considered the views of the French Government were to a certain extent favourable to the cause of the Imperialists", and of Col. Marshall that "his sympathies, as far as I can learn, are certainly embarkedon the side of the Imperialists; from the first he has made no secret of this predilection.." (F.O.17/204 Bonham to Clarendon August 4, 1853). Of the chief representatives of the three Western Treaty powers in China at that time Bonham certainly took the most favourable view of the rebellion, but this is not saying much.

Bonham, however, stated that he was "of opinion that more Political and Commercial advantages are likely to be obtained from the Insurrectionists than we should ever obtain from the Imperialists, supposing a favourable opportunity presented itself for opening negotiations with them. With the former we should have to deal with a new set of men by no means disinclined to serve us, or indisposed towards us, as far as we have hitherto been able to discern. Whereas with the Imperialists we should find them what they have ever proved themselves to be, proud, overbearing and inimical to an extension of Foreign Intercourse." (1)

Bonham, at this stage, seemed to have higher hopes in the rebels than he had had upon his return from Nanking early in May.

His report on these conversations at the beginning of August also reveals how far he had moved away from the idea of intervention, for he strongly opposed the suggestion put up by Clarendon that this was a good time to re-open the question of treaty revision

> "I must at once say, My Lord, that, in my opinion, there never was a more unpropitious time to enter into negotiations for a new Treaty than the present crisis.

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(1) F.O.17/204 Bonham to Clarendon August 4, 1853.

> In the first place, whom is the Treaty to be made with? If with the Emperor, supposing, for the sake of argument, that all approaches to His Majesty were smoothed down and made easy, and His Majesty's wish was as strong as our own to enter into close bonds (all of which suppositions, I need not say, are not within the limits of probability), the first condition of such a treaty would be that assistance should be given to him to put down the Rebellion - an application, I presume, not to be entertained for one moment and entirely at variance with the course of policy prescribed by Her Majesty's Government....."

In any case, Bonham went on, England might miss her aim by treating with the Emperor and then finding the rebels triumph. He therefore concluded that "the wisest if not the only Policy (is) to wait some time longer the issue of Events in the North". Clarendon agreed.(1)

The core of Bonham's policy of neutrality was simply to watch and to wait because there was nothing much else that could be done. He had no firm and consistent preference for either side, nor was he merely biding his time until he felt the conditions for intervention against the rebellion were favourable. British neutrality, as formulated by Bonham and

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(1) F.O.17/198 Clarendon to Bonham October 3, 1853.

approved by Clarendon, was not benevolently inclined towards anything but the preservation and possible extension of British interests in China. Whichever side showed itself to be the more able and ready to protect and further those interests would, in the end, win British support. But which side this would be was still quite uncertain in the middle of 1853. Bonham advised, therefore, that all that could be done was to keep well clear of the struggle and await the course of events. Naturally, as the situation changed policy might change also. But what the course of events would be, and how British policy might change, neither Bonham nor anyone else had any clear conception, still less any clear plans.

CHAPTER III

Neutrality in Practice (1853-5)

Events soon showed that it would be difficult to await the outcome of the struggle without becoming, in some measure, involved in it. Difficulties arose not so much over the main rebellion at Nanking, since after the crisis of early 1853 this did not again threaten British interests on the coast for seven years, with one brief exception during 1856, but rather over the risings of other rebels at Amoy, Shanghai and near Canton. British interests were for the time being more directly affected by these movements than by the Taiping rebellion itself. But since they were stimulated by the success of the Taipings, and since British experience of them, especially at Shanghai, helped influence the development of later British policy towards the larger movement, they must receive some consideration here. Further, the argument that British neutrality "existed in name only" and was from the beginning pro-Manchu in inclination is based partly on an examination of British policy towards these risings, which are also seen as part of a great national revolution of the Chinese people against Manchu rule. As such, it is argued, the success of the rebels who seized Amoy and Shanghai was

feared by the British government no less than was the success of the Taipings themselves.

Much the most important of these risings was that which occurred at Shanghai in September, 1853, when the city was suddenly seized by members of the Hsiao Tao Hui (Small Sword Society), an offshoot of a larger secret society known as the San Ho Hui (Triad Society), whence the Shanghai rebels are often referred to as Triads. The taotai Wu, whose requests for aid against the Taipings had been rejected by Bonham in March and April, fled in disguise into the foreign settlement and was sheltered by American friends. After a few weeks in hiding Wu set about gathering forces to recapture the city and requested aid from Alcock, who refused it in accordance with Bonham's earlier instructions. Bonham, informed of these happenings at Shanghai, even went so far as to instruct Alcock not to allow Wu to take refuge again in the foreign settlement,

> "for so long as he is suffered to reside under Foreign Protection, and there to concoct his schemes against the Rebels, it cannot be affirmed that the British authorities are observing the strict neutrality which it is desirable that they should maintain, while his residence in the settlement might furnish the Rebels with a plausible pretext for making a forcible entry into it for the purpose of capturing him".(1)

(1) F.O.17/205 enc. in Bonham to Clarendon Oct. 10, 1853.

The cautious Bonham began by being very strictly neutral towards the Triad rebellion.

A more important issue than the sheltering of the refugee officials of a displaced power was the fate of the customs duties at Shanghai. Much the most important result of the Triad rising was the emergence of the Foreign Inspectorate of Chinese customs, first established at Shanghai in the middle of 1854 and later extended to other treaty ports.(1) The creation of an efficient and honest administration of the Imperial customs was to prove one of the main pillars of continued Manchu rule in China, for it ensured to the Peking Government a dependable and growing revenue, and it helped provide the finances for the campaigns that eventually defeated the Taiping rebellion. In addition, the indemnity payments exacted from China after the second "opium" war of 1856-60 were met from it. It was a system highly unpopular with most British merchants in China, who preferred a customs service more easily evaded and bribed, but it was criticised by one of those merchants, John Scarth, as providing clear evidence

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(1) The account of the customs issue at Shanghai which follows is based on J.K.Fairbank, Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast, cc 21-3; see also S.Wright, Hart and the Chinese Customs (1950) c.4.

of the readiness of what he called "mandarin-worshipping" British officials in China to co-operate with an unpopular Manchu government at the expense of a national rebellion.(1) But taking account of the very complex origins of this system it is, I think, clear that it was in no sense intended by the British officials who helped establish it to further the Imperialist cause against the rebellion at large. It began as a local solution to a local problem, not as the first step in a secret campaign against the Chinese revolution.

When the Triad rebels captured Shanghai the Chinese customs house, although situated in the foreign settlement area, was completely looted and destroyed, with the result that the taotai Wu had no headquarters from which to collect this important revenue. Alcock and the American consul were quick to institute a provisional system of collection, not in order to preserve the revenue of an imperial government no longer able to protect foreign trade at Shanghai, but to maintain the treaty basis upon which legal foreign trade with China depended. Under the tariff regulations attached to the Treaty of Nanking the British consul was required to act as security for the payment of customs duties by British merchants

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(1) J. Scarth, Twelve Years in China pp 261-3; similar critism was made by the Daily News Sept 22, 1854.

and to see that no British vessel left port without a customs clearance from the Chinese authorities. Alcock feared that failure on his part to observe these provisions, even during a rebellion against the government with which the treaty had been concluded, might impair the legality of British trade at the port. The payments due from the British vessels were therefore collected by him in the form of promissory notes, ready cash being short, which were to be honoured by the Merchants if the British Government approved Alcock's action and agreed with him that it was legally necessary for the duties to be paid, whatever the political situation at Shanghai.

The merchants, needless to say, protested most strongly and argued that if the Manchu government could not maintain its authority at Shanghai it had no right to a revenue from foreign trade at the port, which it was no longer protecting. While instructions from England were awaited, however, Alcock continued to collect the promissory notes, at the same time refusing to recognize Wu's authority to collect the duties himself, and denying him any facilities for re-establishing a customs house in the foreign settlement. In contrast, the American Commissioner, Colonel Marshall, was much more sympathetic to Wu's attempts to re-establish control over the

customs, but in face of opposition from American merchants, who were no more inclined than the British to pay duties to a discredited Imperial authority, Marshall's endeavors during October, 1853, to end the provisional system came to nothing. Bonham, cautious as ever, did not himself oppose Alcock's measures but left it to the Foreign Office to decide, although rather sympathetic to the merchant point of view. Alcock's stand was between that of the majority of the merchants and that of Colonel Marshall. He believed the customs duties should continue to be collected by some authority or other, in order to maintain the treaty basis of foreign trade at Shanghai, but in the circumstances existing at the end of 1853, was not prepared to recognize the Imperial taotai at the port as a satisfactory authority for the purpose. There was no question of recognizing the Triads, besieged as they were by Imperialist forces and in no position to protect or administer the foreign trade.

In January 1854, the views of the Foreign Office on the question were received. Clarendon held that the obligation placed on British consuls by the tariff regulations of 1843 was not binding if the Imperial authority was subverted, and although he commended Alcock's attempt to deal with the situation, he agreed with Bonham that the consul should not be expected to

act as if the Imperial authority would return. He therefore instructed that Alcock's measures "should only be enforced so long as it is reasonable to suppose that the suspension of Imperial authority is of a temporary and accidental character".(1) The Triads still controlled the city so that, lacking Foreign Office approval and in face of merchant opposition, Alcock abandoned the provisional system of collection of duties. By this time Wu had established a new customs house outside the foreign settlement area, and this was now recognized by the British and American consuls. But it was generally and easily evaded by the foreign merchants, who were less inclined than ever to pay duties in cash, and who argued that in the confused political circumstances Shanghai should be made a free port. The ending of the provisional system of promissory notes and the inability of Wu to get the authority of his new customs house acknowledged by the merchants meant that foreign trade at Shanghai, during the first half of 1854, was conducted on a highly irregular basis. Smuggling became the norm.

Such a situation was regarded by both Alcock and Bowring, who replaced Bonham at Hong Kong in April, as being against the real, long term interests of foreign trade on the China coast. They feared the spread of disorder and smuggling, while Bowring

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(1) F.O.228/153 Clarendon to Bonham Nov. 24, 1853.

also feared [redacted] Imperial retaliation for the loss of the duties in the form of an interruption to the tea trade and a consequent loss of revenue to the British exchequer. They therefore urged upon the Manchu authorities at Shanghai the need to re-organize the customs service there entirely, and this, they argued, could best be done by the introduction of European officers who would be in the employ of the Chinese government and who would be above the peculation and connivance at smuggling which characterized the old system. In order to persuade the Shanghai authorities to accept a measure of foreign participation in the customs administration of the port, Bowring, as well as the American authorities, promised to try to secure collection of the back duties for which promissory notes were still held, subject once again to the approval of the home government. But although Bowring felt that the Imperial government had a just claim to this revenue, his primary concern was for the preservation of regular and orderly conditions of trade at Shanghai. For the British government the claim of the Imperial authorities to the lost customs revenue was not even a secondary consideration, however, and Bowring was sharply reprimanded for making the agreement to secure payment of the back duties. British merchants were not required to honour their promissory notes, which amounted

to about one quarter of a million pounds, though a part of the American duties were paid.

Nevertheless the principle of a foreign element in the administration of the customs service at Shanghai became established in the later months of 1854. Insofar as it was an example of co-operation, it was co-operation only between local British and Chinese authorities, not between governments, and it was in no sense a co-operation against the rebellion, Triad or Taiping. By 1861, the use of foreign officers in the Chinese customs service did become an important element in a British policy designed to strengthen and uphold the Manchu government. But in origin it was intended to serve a much more limited and local aim, and its first introduction in 1854 at Shanghai cannot be regarded as evidence of a particularly pro-Imperialist policy on the part of the British government at that time. (1)

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(1) The U. S. Commissioner McLane reported on July 27,1854, that "measures have been matured under the immediate supervision of the British minister and myself, for the efficient administration of the customs at Shanghai and for the protection and defence of the foreign settlement, with the sanction of the Imperial authorities, and without infringing upon the belligerent rights of those within the walls of the City". (U. S. Congressional Papers, McLane Correspondence, p 122-3).

A major point in the argument that the neutrality of foreign governments at this time was really hostile to the revolutionary movement, is that Shanghai was eventually recaptured with the help of French forces. By easy extension of the argument, England and the United States are associated with the French action, which becomes evidence against the "so called" neutrality of all the Western powers.(1) But in point of fact the British government was most adamant in its refusal to allow British forces to be used in any way to assist the Imperial assault. The best proof of this is provided by the controversy which developed over building a wall or stockade to cut the rebels off from supplies reaching them from the foreign settlement on the north side of the city. Without the aid thus received the Triads could not have held the city for so long, but the Imperialist forces were prevented from investing the city on that side by the refusal of the foreign powers to allow them access to the settlement area. This refusal had led to a quite serious armed clash between British and American forces, many of them volunteers, and Imperialist forces who encroached upon the settlement, in April 1854. During this "Battle of Muddy Flat", as it was

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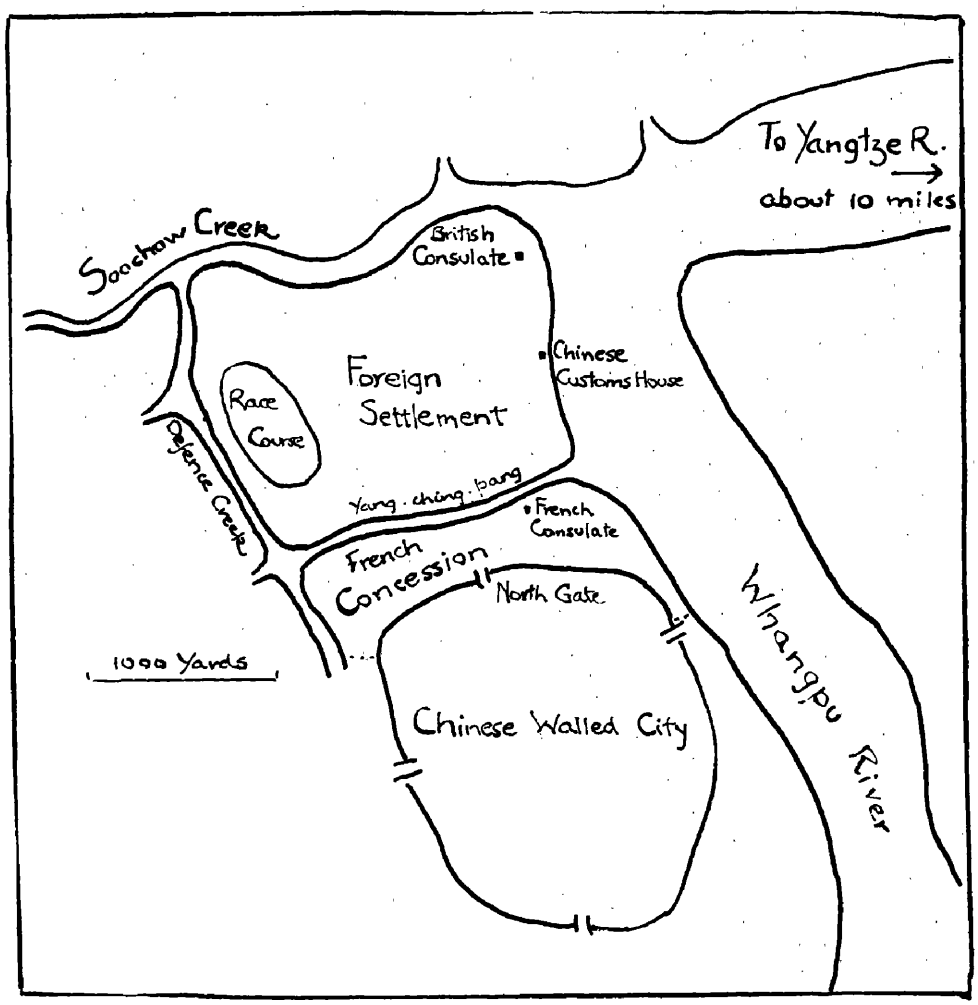
(1) See Lo Erh-kang, op.cit., p 168; Fan Wen-lan, Chung-kuo chin-tai shih, vol I p 122; cf. Hsiao I-shan Ch'ing-tai tung shih, vol IV (1932) p 71.

SHANGHAI 1853-4



J.K. Fairbank, Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast (1953), Vol I p417

called, an Imperial encampment close to the settlement was destroyed. Shortly afterwards the rebels took advantage of the situation to attack the weakened Imperialist position, and of this attack Alcock reported that,

> "Both parties, in the course of skirmishing, occasionally crossed within our limits, but were speedily warned off by a few shots from parties of British and American marines, conveniently posted for that purpose".(1)

This was armed neutrality beyond question, but also even-handed neutrality.

At the same time, although they had no regard for the calibre or discipline of the Imperial troops beseiging the city and made their task more difficult by refusing to allow them to attack the city from the north side, the British authorities did recognize an obligation to try to prevent supplies and arms reaching the rebels. Consular notifications forbidding trafficking in arms with either side were issued,(2) but in the absence of a police force it was difficult to enforce these upon a population in which there was a large adventurer

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(1) A & P 1854 (1792) p 9, Alcock to Bonham, April 13, 1854. For other examples of the British refusal to allow the Imperialists access to the foreign settlement area see F.O.17/205 Bonham to Clarendon, Nov. 26, 1853 enc. Alcock to Wu, Nov. 4; F.O.17/212 enc. in Bonham despatch No.6, 1854 (the despatch itself is missing); Fairbank, op.cit. p 430 n.

(2) F.O.228/176 Alcock to Bonham May 1, 1854 enclosing joint notification of consuls of April 24.

element, drawn mainly from deserting seamen, and many traders who habitually engaged in the smuggling of opium, if of nothing else. The China coast generally, and Shanghai in particular, was already a focal point for the riff-raff of both East and West, a fact which did not make the strict enforeement of a policy of neutrality any easier.(1) There were frequent complaints from the Manchu authorities conducting the siege at the continuance of a trade which, even if not condoned by foreign officials at the port, certainly constituted a large breach of neutrality on the part of the foreign community as a whole. Alcock admitted that in this respect British neutrality was simply verbal, but he meant this in exactly the opposite sense to those later historians who attack the "falsity" of British policy.

> "How shall we maintain that to be neutrality in any sense of the word that is not meant to deceive", he asked, "which allows a beleaguered city to draw succour daily under the protection of our Flag, our guns, and the prestige of our power, without which they could not have held the City

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(1) Note F.O.17/227 Bowring to Clarendon Jan 25, 1855, on the difficulty of dealing with "a host of filibustering cut-throats and deserters (subjects of the Queen) who, under the pretence of joining the patriots, are committing every species of robbery and outrage...Our neutrality as it now exists, has brought into full activity every element of disorder..."

"in insurrection against the Government of China, and the withdrawal of which is certain destruction to them. If we really desire neutrality and to give it effect, this can only be done by isolating the Foreign Settlement from both camps and denying succour or supplies to either." (1)

With the support of Bowring therefore Alcock agreed to co-operate with the Imperial and French authorities in the construction of a wall between the foreign settlement and the besieged rebels.(2)

Unexpected difficulties in the way of a British contribution to this project were soon met with. The Senior Naval Officer at Shanghai, upon whom Alcock called for forces to assist in the construction and protection of the wall, refused to co-operate, on the ground that his instructions forbade him to use his forces for any other purpose than the actual protection of the lives and property of British residents in the port. Against the protests and arguments of both Alcock and Bowring, his stand was approved by the then Commander of British naval forces on the China station, Sir James Stirling, and eventually by the Foreign Office and Admiralty also. Clarendon

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(1) F.O.228/177 Alcock to Capt. Callaghan, enc. in Alcock to Bowring, Dec. 29, 1854.

(2) ibid, Alcock to Bowring, Nov. 23, 1854.

on receipt of reports on this issue, insisted that Imperialist troops were not to be permitted to enter the foreign settlement at all, even if only to build a wall, and that any action taken by British forces "must not assume the character of active intervention in favour of either parties".(1) By the time these instructions reached the scene the whole affair was actually over. The wall was built with French assistance, supplies to the rebels were cut off, and the city recaptured in the middle of February, 1855. But the British contribution to this result cannot be put in the same catgory as that of the French. When the latter, provoked by rebel fire across their settlement, attacked the city on January 6th and made a breach in the wall, at the cost of some fifty casualties to themselves, the British forces merely looked uncomfortably on. Alcock complained that "the impossibility, under existing circumstances, of our taking part in these operations has necessarily placed the British authorities, civil and naval, in a very painful position".(2)

In all this it is apparent that both Alcock and Bowring had a strong preference for the Imperialists over the rebels

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(1) F.0.17/224 Clarendon to Bowring Jan 4, 1855. For other correspondence on the wall issue see esp. F.0.17/219 Alcock to Hammand Nov. 1, 1854; F.0.228/177 Alcock to Bowring Dec. 22, 1854; F.0.17/226-7 Bowring to Clarendon, Jan 5 and 29, 1855.

(2) F.0.228/195 Alcock to Bowring Jan 11, 1855.

occupying Shanghai, and that they wanted to restore the former to authority in the city. But their wishes and preferences did not constitute official British policy,[1] nor, so far as I can see did they seriously affect the working of that policy at the expense of the rebels. The anxiety of Bowring to see the Imperialists restored to power in Shanghai is illustrated by his attempts to mediate between them and the Triads. He was convinced that the latter were purely destructive, and that sooner or later the Imperialists would recapture the city. Their rule, for all its faults, was preferable to disruption and anarchy. But although he speculated on

> "the desirableness of our interfering to free the city of the pests that infest it by forcibly entering and taking temporary possession, for it is quite to be apprehended that if the city is to be abandoned to Imperial Troops, frightful slaughter will accompany their entrance",[2]

his main effort to resolve the situation was to offer to persuade the rebels to leave the city in return for an Imperial amnesty. This broke down over the question of what to do with the rebels

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(1) Note the memo by Hammond attached to the draft of Clarendon to Bowring Jan 4, 1855, in F.O.17/224: "The only safe course appears to be perfect neutrality as far as the Government is concerned, although Bowring clearly wants to take an active part in favour of the Imperialists, and Alcock shares his opinion".

(2) F.O.17/214 Bowring to Clarendon July 6, 1854.

once they left the city. Bowring offered to transport them up the Yangtze, apparently to join the Taipings at Nanking, but Chi-erh-hang-a, the Manchu general commanding the Imperial forces attacking the city replied, not surprisingly, that this was more than his head was worth. Chi-erh added, according to the British report of the conversation, "that it would be better that our ships should fire upon the city, and his army would lie in wait and catch the rebels as they escaped. It would be better still if we would take the rebels to some foreign country. Sir John said", the report concluded, "that no such course could be taken".(1) The Foreign Office approved Bowring's attempts at mediation while warning him "to adhere to the policy of not interfering by force between the Belligerents".(2)

Shanghai was recaptured with foreign assistance, but this was French assistance, and although the British officials on the spot in China were certainly inclined to stretch the official policy of neutrality in a pro-Imperialist direction by 1854, they were not very successful in actually doing so because of the insistance of the Foreign Office upon not helping

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(1) F.O.228/164 Bowring to Clarendon June 27, 1854 enc. memos of conversations with the Chinese authorities at Shanghai. For the Chinese reports on these conversations see Earl Swisher, China's Management of the American Barbarians (1951) pp 212-13.

(2) F.O.17/211 Clarendon to Bowring Sept. 25, 1854.

either side, and because of the stand taken by the commanders of British naval forces in the area on the question of the barrier wall. The one occasion on which British forces were seriously engaged was at the expense of the Imperialists, not to their benefit.

The rising at Amoy occurred some months before that at Shanghai, and anticipated many of its features. In particular the question of the payment of customs duties arose, as at the larger port, and Clarendon gave a similar ruling that the British consul was to accept no responsibility for the collection of customs revenue on behalf of an Imperial government no longer in a position to protect foreign trade at the port.(1) In some ways the problem of avoiding involvement in the struggle was even more difficult at Amoy than at Shanghai, for the Imperial campaign to recapture the city was mainly a naval one, so that foreign vessels in the harbour had to be always ready to move from their anchorages if they were to avoid being used as stalking horses by the Imperial war junks.(2) Requests from Imperial officials for the direct assistance of British war vessels were refused, as they were elsewhere, but foreign merchants carried on a highly profitable trade in arms and

(1) See Wright, op. cit., p 91 and Fairbank, op.cit., pp 410-13.
(2) See F.O.17/209 Admiralty to F.O., Nov. 19, 1853 enclosing report of Capt. Mellersh from Amoy.

gunpowder with both sides. When the city was finally recaptured in November, 1853, the British consul intervened to put a stop to the indiscriminate slaughter of "rebels", who were actually the unfortunate inhabitants of the city, the real leaders of the rising having safely escaped, and British vessels rescued many from death by drowning. It is difficult to see that British action at Amoy in any way compromised the declared policy of neutrality. Six months after the capture of the city Bowring reminded the vice-consul there of "the necessity of every precaution in order that Her Majesty's functionaries may not be supposed to be partisans in the unfortunate commotions which agitate so many parts of the Chinese Empire".(1)

In the case of the disturbances around Canton during 1854-5 the issue is less clear cut, but the main conclusion the same. Lo Erh-kang says that England, France and America smuggled supplies of gunpowder, covered by grain, and arms to such an extent that, on the admission of the Manchu officials themselves, the fact that Canton did not fall to the rebels was due to the help received from Hong Kong.(2) This argument seems to confuse the actions of Western nationals with the

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(1) F. O. 17/213 enc. in Bowring to Clarendon April 28, 1854.

(2) Lo Erh-kang, op. cit., p 168.

policies of Western governments, and to assume that when the former helped the Imperialists, as some of them certainly did at Canton, it was with the active encouragement of their governments. The smuggling of supplies of "Chinese snuff" (gunpowder) and Enfield "umbrellas" became a considerable business on the China coast in these years, but it was essentially a private enterprise which was not selective about its customers. Moreover, Governor Yeh at Canton later complained in a memorial that, at this time, (December 1854 to January, 1855), "the barbarians secretly furnished the insurgents cannon and powder, and also sold their loot for them. This is known positively."(1) It cannot be said that one side only benefitted from the smuggling of arms.

The colonial government at Hong Kong attempted to check this trade, as well as other breaches of neutrality, by an Ordinance passed by the Legislative Council of the colony on January 17th, 1855. This fixed penalties of up to two years imprisonment and fines of up to five thousand dollars (about £1,000) for any British subject in any part of China who assisted either side, whether

"by personal enlistment in the service of either of the said several parties, or by procuring other persons to

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(1) Swisher, op. cit., p 303; also p.324.

enlist in such service, or by furnishing, selling or procuring warlike stores of any description, or by fitting out vessels, or by knowingly and purposely doing any other act to assist either party by which neutrality may be violated".(1)

To enforce such an Ordinance over a vast area of the China coast on a British population which, although small in number, was not remarkable for its amenability to legal restraints, was no simple matter, but it cannot be dismissed as proclaiming an empty neutrality.(2)

Another difficulty in the way of a policy of neutrality which was especially apparent in the south of China was that of distinguishing between rebels who had some sort of political programme, into which category the Taipings certainly came, and bandits or pirates who simply used the rebel disturbances as a convenient cover for their normal activities. The problem of piracy on the China coast was a chronic one in these years, and Bowring more than once pointed to the difficulty of following any

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(1) A & P. 1864 (525) p 18. The Ordinances of Hong Kong (London, 1866 p95-7, says this article in the ordinance lapsed in Jan. 1857, but it was certainly in force again about 1862. See below pp 208,166

(2) This is what Lo says of it. On the other hand it was perhaps aimed against the rebellion in the sense that most breaches of neutrality by British subjects at this time, especially at Shanghai, were in favour of the rebels. See F.O. 17/227 Bowring to Clarendon Jan.25, 1855 and F.O.228/164 (56) Bowring to Clarendon June 14, 1854. (above p.65 n1)

simple policy towards the "interblending of patriotism and piracy, robbery and rebellion", which he found in the situation.(1) On this account he refused to recognize that the mixed forces attacking Canton at the beginning of 1855 had any claim to belligerent rights, in particular the right of blockading the port.

> "Scarcely a day passes" he reported, "in which the so-called rebels do not stop ships and boats bearing the British flag, many of which they pillage, and the whole movement seems merging into such undoubted and palpable piracy that a collision can hardly be avoided if our Trade is to receive protection. The rebels seem to have scarcely any means of support but in plunder - they exist principally by the seizure and sale of the property of other people; and the small amount of patriotism and insurrection entitled to the slightest respect and consideration is sunk in the great object of subjecting the opulent city of Canton to be sacked by the hordes of vagabonds who exercise authority on the River and/in whose hands there can be little doubt a fate as gloomy and desolating as that which reduced Shanghae to its present awful misery, would await the City..... It has

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(1) F.O.17/230 Bowring to Clarendon May 14, 1855; also note below. On the problem of piracy on the China Coast at this time see G.Fox, British Admirals and Chinese Pirates (1940)

"been again announced to the Rebel Chiefs, whose followers are divided into independent sections not recognizing any common head, that any claim to the right of blockade will not be admitted....."(1)

There is no doubt Bowring too easily ignored the real elements of social protest behind these movements, but some of them were certainly very destructive expressions of the prevailing malaise of Chinese society. Strict neutrality was not an easy attitude to maintain towards them, but no official British aid was given to the Manchu authorities at Canton, any more than at Amoy or Shanghai.

Thus it seems to me that the policy of armed and limited neutrality laid down in 1853 was applied as consistently as was possible in the exceedingly difficult circumstances which obtained on the China coast during the period from 1853 to 1855.(2) The legal basis of that policy may be questioned, but so far as the strictly historical question of its early application is concerned there is little evidence to support the argument that it was, at this stage, a consciously biassed policy. The Battle

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(1) F.O.17/228 Bowring to Clarendon Feb. 28, 1855.

(2) Even so sharp a critic of British policy as Scarth recognised "the difficult position in which the English and American Consuls were placed" (Twelve Years in China, p.212)

of Muddy Flat, the failure of British forces to help build the barrier wall at Shanghai or to assist the French in their attack upon the city, the consistent refusal of the requests of Imperial officials for the direct assistance of British forces, the Foreign Office attitude to the fate of the Imperial customs revenue at both Amoy and Shanghai - all these show that British policy during these years cannot fairly be described as one especially inclined to favour the Manchus, whatever it later became.

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The question now arises how far British officials in China and in the Foreign Office identified the rebellion at Nanking with these risings on the coast which they certainly came to regard as undesirable movements, more piratical than rebellious. As already seen, this was at first the view taken of the Taiping rebellion also, but after 1853 it could not be regarded as other than a major political and military challenge to the reigning dynasty. During the years now under consideration, the shift in official British opinion about it was, broadly, that although it was still regarded as a serious rebellion, and in that respect in a superior category to the other risings, its chances of ultimate success were steadily

discounted, and it came to be seen as a probably worse, rather than a possibly better, alternative to the Manchus.

That it was put in a quite different category to the risings at Shanghai and elsewhere, is illustrated by a memo of Clarendon's, written in his own nearly illegible handwriting, attached to the draft of a despatch he sent Bowring on the wall question at Shanghai.

> "The case of Shanghai", he wrote, "differs somewhat from the rebellion - a band of thieves having no political objects and who are wholly repudiated by the Nanking rebels have got possession of a wealthy commercial city and inflict serious injury upon the foreign trade that by returns (?) is shown to be carried on there. Their expulsion would on every account be desirable, and if the courage and perseverance of the Imperialists could be relied on I should be disposed, for our own sakes and not in order to meddle between the contending parties, to give them some assistance, but as there would be great risk in making the Factory ground a battlefield we had better adhere to the neutral position that has hitherto been maintained".(1)

Clearly, Clarendon made a distinction between the Taiping rebels and the "robbers" at Shanghai. If he insisted, whatever the

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(1) F.O.17/224, attached to draft of Clarendon to Bowring, Jan. 4, 1855.

grounds, on remaining neutral between the latter and the Imperialists, it is hardly necessary to point out how much more disposed he was to maintain that policy between the Imperialists and the Nanking rebels.

Further evidence of the existence of this distinction in the minds of British officials is provided by a Note on the Rebellion in China, 1852 - 5, published in September, 1855, by Thomas Wade, then Chinese Secretary at Hong Kong. Bowring commended this to Clarendon's attention as the best summary of the rebellion to that date. In it Wade wrote,

> "The seizure of Amoy and Shanghai in 1853 and the attempt on Canton last winter.....are episodes in (the rebellion's) history, but we have no ground for believing that the actors in these movements were recognized by the greater body with which they claimed to identify themselves; and the wide differences between the character credibly attributed to the occupants of Nan-King and that of the other rebels in question, of which we have had evidence more direct and convincing, would of itself incline us to dispute that assumption".(1)

The argument that England opposed the lesser risings of 1853-5 as part of a policy of "false" neutrality towards the Taiping

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(1) F.O.17"233 enc. in Bowring to Clarendon Sept. 10,1855.

rebellion is thus weak at two points. British policy did not set out, secretly or openly, to destroy those rebellions, and they were in any case clearly distinguished from that at Nanking.

At the same time, the shift in official British opinion about the Taipings, at least among consular officers in China, was unmistakable. The view that the movement was worthless both from a political and religious viewpoint began steadily to reassert itself. One reason for this was the defeat of the northern campaign. As early as November 1853 Meadows had reported that,

> "When it became apparent that the Imperial Government had not only lost all prestige but were wholly without means of resisting the advance of the Insurgents to Nankin, or strength to re-establish order in the provinces, the best hope of the country seemed to lie in the rapid advance of Taeping on Pekin, and the reins of Government being seized before the whole Empire fell into a state of disorganization. The long check they seem to have had on the banks of the Yellow river, without encouraging a hope of new energy in the Imperialist camp, goes far to destroy all propects or anticipations built upon the unity and decided superiority of the forces attacking them".[1] (i.e. the Imperialists.)

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(1) F.O.228/162 enc. in Alcock to Bonham Nov. 1, 1853: for Bonham doubts on the likely success of the northern expedition see F.O.17/205 Bonham to Clarendon Oct.26 & Nov.14,1853.

In forwarding a report in June 1854 on rebel defeats in the north, Bowring commented that "the insurrectionary tide is not so irresistible as it has been generally considered among foreigners",(1) and he frequently expressed his conviction that the Taipings could not resolve the internal divisions of China.

> "One sees a disorganizing and destroying influence which is everywhere undermining authority, but which seems to furnish few materials for the establishment of order and good government," he wrote soon after his return to China. "Even if the Nanking party should obtain the mastery at Peking, there is great reason to apprehend that a very large portion of the vast empire would not recognize nor obey its authority, and that it would not be competent to subdue the elements of sedition and disorder so universally scattered".(2)

The hopes, never more than half entertained by British officials during 1853, of a quick settlement of the rebellion, one way or the other, were soon entirely abandoned.

Apart from the obvious loss of momentum in the rebellion itself, doubts were increased as a result of the few contacts made with the Taiping rebels by Westerners after Bonham's initial

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(1) F.O.17/214 Bowring to Clarendon June 27, 1854.
(2) F.O.17/213 Bowring to Clarendon April 28, 1854; cf. also ibid May 21st - "There seems no unity of purpose, no common cause, no general understanding or combination between the different groups of the disaffected. They fight under various banners, recognize no common head - all is confusion and discord and disorganization, and it is difficult to distinguish any element so influential and so predominant as to become a foundation for the future Government of this vast Empire".

visit to Nanking. No other Western visitor actually reached the rebel capital until the French minister, Bourboulon, arrived in the "Cassini" in December, 1853. Before then Bonham had instructed Alcock to avoid unnecessary communication with the rebels, and the rebels themselves showed a strong disposition to avoid contacts. A few missionaries attempted to reach them by independent means, but without success, so that for many months Western knowledge about the character of the movement, as distinct from its military fortunes, did not advance much upon what it was immediately after Bonham's visit. Official Western opinion varied from the frankly hostile, as in the case of the American Commissioner, Colonel Marshall, to dubious but moderate approval, as with Bonham. Non-official Western opinion was mainly favourable and hopeful, though less unanimously and definitely so than is sometimes suggested. There were certainly many who were sceptical or hostile from the beginning, especially the French missionaries who mistrusted the Protestant origins of Taiping Christianity. The visit of the "Cassini" does not seem to have changed things greatly. Those who were hopeful about the rebellion found confirmation of their ideas in the rebel treatment of the French visitors, as did those who were sceptical. On the whole, so far as British views on the rebellion were concerned, things remained as they had

been.[1]

The journey of the new American Commissioner, Robert McLane, in the "Susquehannah" at the end of May, 1854, had a much more disturbing effect. McLane reported very unfavourably on the Taiping attitude towards "tributary" nations and on their religious and political organization.

> "Mr. McLane thinks that from their great valour and physical superiority they may succeed in overturning the Tartar Dynasty", Bowring reported to Clarendon, "but sees nothing among them out of which a future Imperial dynasty can be permanently constructed..... Except as "brothers" or "subjects" or "tribute bearers" to the celestial king, it appeared that the visits of foreigners would receive no encouragement, but would on the contrary be most unwelcome... Whatever may be the grief and disappointment with which information will be received as to the real character of the Protestant religious element in this most extraordinary movement, I cannot but hope that it will facilitate the opening of China, the development of commerce, and the ultimate reception of gospel truth".[2]

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(1) Cf, for example, the North China Herald Dec. 19, 1853, (in FO17/212) which presented the French report as bearing out its previous favourable views on the rebellion, and the China Mail Jan.26, 1854, which presented it as further proof of the "delusions" of such as the N.C.H. in the movement. Bonham merely commented that the French appeared to have been treated as were the English (F.O.17/212 to Clarendon Jan 10,1854).

See next page for note (2).....

But hopes of this happening in fact were obviously receding.

These "griefs and disappointments" were further strengthened, and indeed confirmed, by the visit of two British vessels, "Rattler" and "Styx". These were sent up to Nanking by Bowring, a few weeks after the return of the American vessel, with the object of obtaining information both about the rebels and about trade and coaling prospects on the Yangtze. Bowring at this time was attempting to negotiate a revision of the 1842 treaty with the Manchu authorities, and hoped that this would include the right to trade on the Yangtze, hence the double object of the visit. It was led by W. H. Medhurst, son of the famous missionary and at that time Chinese Secretary at Hong Kong, and by Bowring's own son, Lewin, who had accompanied him to China as a private secretary. No official report of this journey was ever printed, but it certainly greatly strengthened the swing of foreign opinion in China away from the rebellion. The first, summary report was such, Bowring commented to Clarendon, "as not to leave a shadow of doubt as to the political or

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(2) from previous page...
F.O.17/214 Bowring to Clarendon June 10, 1854. McLane himself reported to the U.S.Sec. of State Marcy that, "Whatever may have been the hope of the enlightened and civilised nations of the earth in regard to this movement, it is now apparent that they neither profess nor apprehend Christianity, and whatever may be the true judgment to form of their political power, it can no longer be doubted that intercourse cannot be established or maintained on terms of equality". (U.S.Congressional Papers, McLane Correspondence, p 50).

"religious nature of the movement". Medhurst and Lewin Bowring were baffled in their attempts to reach the higher Taiping authorities and by what they called "the misguided and absurd pretensions, religious and political, put forward by the promoters of this remarkable movement". Though no actual insults were offered,

> "beyond styling us as 'barbarians' and issuing letters to us in the form of mandates; yet it was very evident that there was a great indisposition to hold any communication with us..... We saw no indication whatever of any popular demonstration of sympathy with the views of the Insurgents .... We saw no commerce or any traffic of any kind going on..... We could not find in answer to enquiries that any properly organized form of government exists among them, although certainly implicit obedience is shown to the commands of the higher authorities. We noticed a total absence of men of age, of education or of respectability..."

As to the prospects of the rebels, this report concluded, "they appear to have no money or resources adequate to maintain a long protracted struggle, and their ultimate success appears from what we saw to be very problematical".(1)

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(1) F.O.228/165 or 17/214, enc. in Bowring to Clarendon July 7, 1854.

The full report submitted by Medhurst and Lewin Bowring a few days later simply expanded this catalogue of condemnations, significantly adding anticipations of ultimate collision between the rebels and the Western powers, and casting doubts upon the real effectiveness of the Taiping prohibition of tobacco and opium smoking. with the comment that "it is doubtful whether the leaders of the movement implicitly follow these tenets". On the religious question, the claims of Yang, the Eastern King, to such titles as "Holy Ghost" were presented as by no means the result of simple ignorance but rather of blasphemous arrogance. There was, therefore, little hope that missionary labours among them would meet with success.(1)

The justice and accuracy of these reports is perhaps open to question. But the importance of this visit in the development of official British policy and opinion about the rebellion is very great, for it marks the virtually complete abandonment of the qualified hopes occasionally expressed during 1853. The policy of armed and watchful neutrality was far from being abandoned, and the Taipings continued to be thought of as serious rebels, at least by the Foreign Office. But whereas Bonham, in August, 1853, had expressed the view that more

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(1) ibid, July 14, 1854.

political and commercial advantages were likely to be obtained from the rebels than from the Imperialists, Bowring, in sending the full report of this 1854 visit to Clarendon, observed that future British commercial relations with China "are certainly not likely to be served by the progress of the rebellion, but rather endangered thereby". Clarendon, acknowledging Bowring's despatch and the reports enclosed in it, noted with regret "that the Mission appears to have only been successful in establishing the fact that the person styled as the Eastern King is an impudent Impostor, and that the Imperial Authorities are more friendly to Great Britain than the Rebels".(1) After this visit the prospects of British neutrality ever moving in a pro-Taiping direction were very remote indeed.

One other aspect of British policy in China in the years 1853-5 which is relevant to any assessment of its bearing towards the rebellion remains to be noted. This is the attempt at treaty revision made by Bowring, with the co-operation of the American Commissioner, McLane, during 1854. Some writers have seen in these negotiations an attempt to revive the policy advocated by Alcock at the beginning of 1853, namely, to persuade the Manchu Government to make further trading and

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(1) F.O.17/211 Clarendon to Bowring Sept. 25, 1854; cf. also F.O.17/215 Bowring to Clarendon July 21, 1854.

diplomatic concessions in return for aid against the rebellion. For example, J. F. Cady says that the failure of Bowring and McLane's "ill-advised" negotiations "stemmed from the fallacious assumption originating with Bonham that the desparate Manchu court would meet whatever demands the foreign powers might make in order to obtain their assistance in suppressing the rebellion".(1) Apart from attributing to Bonham views which I do not think he really held, at any rate after March, 1853, Cady's explanation is open to objection on other counts. In the first place neither Bowring nor McLane were under the delusion that the Manchu court was "desperate" for help against the Taipings, and in the second place there is no firm evidence to support the idea that they actually tried to negotiate on those terms. On the contrary, even when Bowring made his opening move by sending Medhurst, in April, with a dispatch to Governor Yeh at Canton, requesting a meeting on the question, the idea of offering aid to the imperialists was explicitly rejected. Bowring told Medhurst

> "You may have an opportunity of referring to the disorganized state of China, and of stating that the Authorities both at Shanghae and Amoy, have applied to the British Consuls for intervention and assistance, but that it is not the purpose of our Government to interfere in the contentions

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(1) J. F. Cady, op. cit., p.128.

"which unhappily prevail in China unless the duty of providing for the safety of British subjects, or British property, should require interference".(1)

What is hinted at in these instructions and became plain in later discussions at Shanghai and at the Taku forts is that Bowring was quite prepared to use the rebellion as a talking point in the negotiations, and as a useful means of putting pressure on the Imperial government, not by offering aid directly but by threatening to turn to the rebels if the Government did not give way. There is no question that Britain and the other Western powers wanted to use the crisis created by the rebellion to force a wider door into China. But they hoped to do this by subtler and cheaper means than by actually giving material aid to the Imperial government as a first condition.

When, after fruitless negotiations at Canton and Shanghai, Bowring and McLane eventually went north to the Peiho in October, their interpreters, Medhurst and Parker, had a series of conversations with lesser Chinese officials before they themselves met an Imperial envoy, Ch'ung-lun, in front of the Taku forts on November 3rd. Medhurst submitted a long report to Bowring on these early conversations. On October 18th,

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(1) F.O. 228/164 Bowring to Medhurst May 11, 1854 encl in Bowring to Clarendon May 15, 1854.

after speaking of the duty question at Shanghai, Medhurst

> "went on to speak of my visit to Nanking and Chin Keang foo, the progress of the rebellion in the Yangtsee-keang valley, the power and resources of the insurgents, their willingness to trade with us, the entire absence of Imperial authority and the consequent removal of all actual obligation on our part to apply the Treaty in these regions".

The picture drawn of the Taipings for the benefit of the Imperial authorities was strikingly different from that given in his report to Bowring after his visit to Nanking. On the 24th, Medhurst told the Chinese officials that

> "Western Powers were aware that the Chinese Empire was in a disorganized condition, that the Dynasty itself was in peril.....they desired nothing more than to see the Dynasty upheld and order restored throughout the Empire. But if their friendly and reasonable advances were rejected, nothing remained for them but to take such steps as they might deem fit to revive their trade and protect their interests independently of the Imperial government - and they might possibly find it necessary to enter into negotiations with the Insurgents....." (1)

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(1) For Medhurst's report see F.O.17/217 enclosure 3 in Bowring to Clarendon Nov.10, 1854. There are about 65 pages (unnumbered) of the report. The extracts quoted come at about 25 and 45. For the report of the U.S.interpreter, Parker, see U.S.Congressional Papers, McLane Correspondence, pp 305-22 and esp. p 321 for the threat of turning to the rebels. For the Chinese reports see Swisher, op.cit., pp234-6, 241-2, 252-4, 261-2.

All this might perhaps be interpreted as an oblique invitation, Chinese fashion, to take up the question of aid against the rebels, but if this was really what Bowring and McLane wanted they would hardly have failed to press the point more directly at some stage. In fact there was nothing in their conversations with Ch'ung-lun on November 3rd about aid against the rebels, and they returned to the south empty handed.(1)

This, indeed, is what they had expected to happen. In pursuing these protracted negotiations up and down the coast of China their aim was to exhaust the diplomatic means at their disposal for persuading the Chinese government to accept the principle of revision.(2) They did not really expect

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(1) For reports of the Bowring-McLane conversation with Ch'ung-lun see enclosures 6-11 in F.O.17/217 as above; McLane's in U.S.Papers as above pp 285ff ; Ch'ung-lun's in Swisher pp 262-6, 276-7. The Chinese reports of some of the earlier conversations which took place at Shanghai refer to British and American offers of aid in "eradicating the rebels" (Swisher pp 212,217,222 &c.). The British accounts of these conversations do not suggest any general offer of this sort (see F.O.17/215 Bowring to Clarendon July 27 and Aug. 3, 1854) though, as already noted, there were offers to help get rid of the Triads. That a general offer of assistance was not made by the Western representatives during these protracted negotiations is indicated plainly in McLane's report to Marcy (U.S.Congressional Papers p292) in which he stated that although he thought the Imperial authorities had hoped for an offer of aid, this was an idea he had "never entertained and which I do not suppose could command the favour of the government of the U.S.". The same was certainly true for the British government at this time.

(2) See for example F.O.17/216 Bowring to Clarendon Oct, 4,1854, where McLane is quoted by Bowring as saying, "We are anticipating always that we may be refused; and if we are to be

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immediate results, as they surely would had they gone to the north with a firm offer of aid in return for concessions in mind. With England at war with Russia and his instructions from the Foreign Office frequently enjoining strict neutrality upon him, Bowring was simply not in a position to bargain in this way. In reporting the failure of the negotiations he emphasized that at least now there could be no doubt that British grievances about the treaty were well known to the court, despite Yeh's obstructionism at Canton. "But I doubt much if peace will be maintained without the demonstration of war", he added.(1)

The British situation in China was approaching a crisis. Nothing had been achieved by efforts to persuade the Manchu government to make further diplomatic and commercial concessions, and practically all faith in the Taipings as a possible alternative government had been abandoned. China seemed both intractable and chaotic, and unless England was prepared to be content with the gains made in 1842, gains which might become nearly worthless if the prevailing state of rebellion continued and

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refused we had better be refused there(in the north) than here (at Shanghai)"; also F.O.17/214 Bowring to Clarendon June 5th, 1854.

(1) this page..
F.O.17/217 Bowring to Clarendon, Nov.10, 1854.

spread, then a change in British policy towards either the Peking government or the rebellion, or both, was bound to come. During 1854-5, however, no one saw very clearly how this was to be brought about. In the Foreign Office, indeed, there was no disposition to try to bring it about. Bowring's suggestion that a demonstration of force was needed was firmly squashed.

> "Such a course would be doubtful as a matter of right and very questionable as a matter of policy.....it is therefore the positive injunction of Her Majesty's government that you abstain from raising unnecessarily, questions with the Chinese government calculated to make a recourse to force incumbent on this country.....You will take no part, directly or indirectly, in the Civil contests now raging in China. Your duty is to remain a quiet observer of events which may be passing around you, keeping Her Majesty's Government fully informed of what is passing, but holding yourself aloof from all participation in the intestine troubles of the Country".(1)

So far as the British government was concerned there were more important issues at stake at the beginning of 1855 than the fate of British trade in China.

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(1) F.O.17/224 Clarendon to Bowring, Feb.24, 1855.

British officials in China, however, although obliged to remain "quiet observers", could not help but search for some way out of what seemed to them a frustrating situation. The assumptions upon which British policy had been based since the emergence of the rebellion as a major force in China began to be questioned.

> "Neither of the two contingencies which were contemplated in Europe and on which the instruction of Her Majesty's Government were naturally grounded are, as far as I can at present form an opinion, likely to be the result of the existing struggle in China, " Bowring wrote in the middle of 1854. "I do not expect the present Manchu dynasty will be able to maintain its authority over a large part of the Chinese territory; nor do I believe that the Nanking rebels are by any means likely to establish a Government which will be generally recognized or obeyed in China".

In these circumstances the demands for protection of British interests in China were likely to increase, and the danger of involvement in China's internal struggles also. Bowring was clearly apprehensive of the possible results.

> "It is impossible to turn away our attention from consequences contingent upon such interference. The history of British India is full of instruction.....it is no unusual characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race, when

"settling in foreign regions, that they begin by trading and end by governing. It is only by anticipating the great tendencies of events that our policy can be safely guided. I do not hesitate to state to your Lordship that I have often my misgivings lest the future should re-tell the tale of British India, over a vaster field, on a grander scale and with larger interests involved".(1)

A radical Whig and Free Trader, Bowring was no spokesman for extending the bounds of Empire. Indeed, there were few such in England in the mid-nineteenth century, and the lesson of the mutiny in India in 1857 served to reinforce the sort of fear expressed by Bowring in 1854, for that event made the expense and danger of empire seem all too plain. One of the objects behind the later British policy of giving direct aid to the Manchus was, in fact, to prevent the crisis in China developing to the point where England had either to govern the country herself in order to trade, or not to trade at all. As early as 1854-5 British officials in China were beginning to feel that a situation was developing in which such a choice might have to be made. But for the time they could

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(1) F.O.17/214 Bowring to Clarendon June 5,1854; also F.O.228/165 Alcock to Bowring July 21, 1854, where Alcock felt the state of affairs in China was becoming "disastrous beyond all remedy".

only wait upon the development of events in China and in Europe. It seemed a frustrating and unrewarding position, remaining neutral between two sides, one of which was unlikely to be able, and the other had proved quite unwilling to further the prospects of British trade.

CHAPTER IV

War and the Change in Treaty Relations with the Manchu Government (1856-60)

The solution to the dilemma facing British policy in China by 1855 came, not as a result of the success of the rebels, as Bonham had thought possible in 1853, nor by persuading the Manchu government to accept treaty revision, as Bowring had attempted in 1854, but by direct force of arms. The second "opium" war of 1856-60, fought by England in military alliance with France, forced the Manchus to concede the wider openings for trade and the direct diplomatic access to the government in Peking which had been the chief objectives of British policy in China since at least 1850. These were eventually secured by the Treaty of Tientsin (1858) and the Convention of Peking (1860), and the primary concern of British policy in China after the conclusion of these treaties became, not the winning of further concessions, although this was by no means lost sight of, but the full enjoyment of those now gained.

Certain difficulties remained in the way, however, chief among them the continuance of the Taiping rebellion in the area of greatest potential importance to the expansion of British

trade, the Yangtze valley. The conditions for a change in British policy were, therefore, created by the end of 1860. A new and satisfactory treaty settlement was concluded with the old Manchu government, while the rebellion, from which no great advantage not already gained was now to be looked for, gave no sure sign of triumphing, of dying out, or of being suppressed by the unaided efforts of the Manchu government. Many historians have accordingly concluded that here was in fact the turning point in British policy. "Precisely in 1860" the British attitude changed, says Hu Sheng; "the fate of the rebellion was sealed" by the negotiations of 1860, says Tyler Dennett; "France and Britain had no sooner imposed their own terms on the Manchu Imperial Government in the wars of A.D.1857-60 than they perversely supplied the conservative Manchus with the military means of suppressing a spontaneous Chinese Westernizing movement, which the Imperial Government had proved unable to crush out of its own resources", says Arnold Toynbee in a footnote to his monumental Study of History.(1)

(1) Hu Sheng, Imperialism and Chinese Politics (Eng.edn 1955) pp41,44; T.Dennett, op.cit., p369; A.Toynbee A Study of History (1954 edn) Vol VIII p327 n.3. Cf. also W.J.Hail, op.cit., p228-9, who speaks of "the change of front which led the Allies, immediately after their success in the war, to turn around and give active and open help to the Imperial Government". Hu Sheng, op.cit., pp35,45 and Lo Erh-kang, op.cit., p169 both argue that one of the reasons for the war was "to pave the way for co-operation" against the rebels, but I have found no evidence of such a motive in British policy.

My main concern in this and the following chapter is to establish that the decisive change in British policy towards the rebellion did not follow immediately or inevitably upon the treaty settlement of 1860, and to show that England moved towards a policy of intervention in a manner much less certain and abrupt than such statements as those above suggest. The course of events between 1855 and 1860 was certainly such as to make a change in British policy thereafter very probable; but it was also such as to make for considerable doubt and hesitation in adopting that change.

The fortunes of the rebellion during these intermediate years were very mixed. The forces sent north in 1853 were finally destroyed by May, 1855, but in the west considerable fighting continued between the provincial armies of Tseng Kuo-fan and the rebel forces under Shih Ta-kai, the Assistant King. Tseng gradually established himself in the middle reaches of the Yangtze, creating a base from which he was later to advance to the siege and capture of Nanking itself. Generals under his command finally captured Wuchang in December, 1856, and Kiukiang in May, 1858. The greatest rebel success before 1860 was their defeat of the Imperial armies besieging Nanking and Chinkiang in the middle of 1856. Hsiang Jung's "Great Camp of Kiangnan" was destroyed and the siege of Nanking

temporarily lifted, only to be re-imposed at the beginning of 1858 by reorganised Imperial forces under Chang Kuo-liang, who also captured Chinkiang in December, 1857. Thus the rebels failed to win any decisive advantage from their victory over Hsiang Jung. The chief reason for this was the outbreak of internal feuds among them at the end of 1856. The causes and course of these divisions need not detain us here, save to note that they seriously weakened the movement, both militarily and politically. Yang Hsiu-ch'ing, the Eastern King, was murdered, together with some twenty thousand of his adherents, while Shih Ta-kai, the most able of the Taiping generals, deserted Nanking with many of his followers and eventually made his way to Szechuan, where he attempted to establish an independent kingdom. He was finally defeated there in 1863. Hung Hsiu-ch'üan remained supreme at Nanking, but the rebellion had inevitably lost much of the fervour and force of its early years. The energies it did not dissipate in faction fighting were, until the middle of 1860, mainly directed towards the central Yangtze valley, away from the existing centres of Western trade. Neutrality in these circumstances was not so difficult as it had been, or was to become.

For the time being the rebellion, which had once seemed to offer the chance of improving the British situation, became

just another complication in the great Chinese puzzle, although no longer a very distracting one. In May, 1855, Bowring was able to report that his apprehensions were "much diminished, and that the tendencies are now rather towards tranquillity and the restoration of commerce than in a contrary direction",(1) while in August he wrote,

> "The usual uncertainty exists as to the exact position of the contending parties in China.... Where large bodies of the rebels move they seem to meet with little resistance, but they never retain by any consolidation of government the places they abandon.
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> "As regard British interests, I see nothing at present seriously to compromise them. Tranquillity is restored to Canton and its neighbourhood, and I have no reason to think that the piratical fleets on the coast are in a condition to molest any of the Five Ports. We hear reports of the death of the "Western King". 'The religious element' of the Insurrection is now scarcely ever referred to, and as regards the pirates, all their banners and devices show that they profess to belong to the brotherhood of the Triads and other secret societies, which have always existed in China since the overthrow of the Ming dynasty".(2)

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(1) F.O.17/230 Bowring to Clarendon May 26, 1855.
(2) F.O.17/233 Bowring to Clarendon Aug. 10, 1855.

From Shanghai also, D. B. Robertson, who had replaced Alcock there as consul in April, 1855, reported at the end of the year that there were no disturbing movements by the Taiping forces, their "headquarters" at Chinkiang and Nanking being still watched by the Imperialists "from a convenient distance". "The state of affairs may be designated as being at "deadlock"," he concluded.(1)

There was no change during the early part of 1856, and the few official reports made on the subject during that year emphasised the hopelessness of both sides from the British point of view. "The rebel cause cannot be pronounced to be prospering anywhere on a grand scale", Wade reported in January, adding that around Canton he could find "no sympathy with the Rebels in any class, labourers, shopkeepers or, so far as I had access to them, literary men".(2) But the Imperial government also appeared to have no reserves of popular support. In forwarding yet another of Wade's reports, Bowring commented that he could himself

"find nowhere any growing confidence or affection for the Imperial Government. It is utterly unable to grapple with the difficulties of its position. On the other hand, the various rebel bands appear only to represent a wild disorder,

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(1) F.O.228/195 Robertson to Bowring Dec. 22, 1855.
(2) F.O.17/244 enc. in Bowring to Clarendon Jan. 14, 1856.

"quite sufficient to disorganise society but helpless for the establishment of authority. The successful inroads of these revolutionary bands shake all confidence in the Peking Government, whose blindness, pride and obstinacy seem impervious to all lessons of experience".(1)

Wade concluded in the report to which Bowring added these comments that the rebel movement was more indebted to the "imbecility" of the Imperial Government for its continued existence than to any vigour of its own, and he could see no end to the struggle.

"There is no incident in this wretched history that may enable one to name a term of years within which the struggle shall be concluded. The Emperor recovers ground lost in one province, only, as it were, to see the rebellion condense in another; and the rebels, though stubborn and formidable, are still, considered as a whole, on the defensive, and have now to recommence, geographically speaking, from a point little in advance of where they were at the beginning of 1854."

British officials in China were becoming increasingly impatient with the general state of affairs in China, but their efforts to prod the Foreign Office into thinking about a future policy

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(1) F.O.17/246 Bowring to Clarendon April 12, 1856, enclosing Wade's report.

received no encouragement, Clarendon preferring to leave relations with China "to their own operation, and a better state of things may thus be prepared without being precipitated".(1)

The situation changed temporarily in May, 1856, when the Taipings suddenly routed the forces besieging Chinkiang, preparatory to their attack on Hsiang Jung's forces at Nanking. For a time they threatened the important city of Soochow, and it seemed possible that now at last they would advance to the coast and attempt to occupy Shanghai. The unwelcome prospect of a second rebel occupation of the city, and a second Imperialist siege, so soon after the expulsion of the Triads, prompted a significant shift in British policy. Rather than allow a re-enactment of the scenes of the last few years, Consul Robertson argued, "the city should be taken possession of by the three treaty powers and held intact", although with only one man-o'war in port at uncertain intervals he was in no position to initiate such a move himself.(2) But at least, he

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(1) F.O.17/225 Clarendon to Bowring Dec. 8,1855, in reply to Bowring of Sept.13, 1855, in F.O.17/233 in which Bowring reminded Clarendon that "the state of China will press itself with growing urgency upon Your Lordship's notice, and delay in deciding on a future policy will, I fear, only augment present difficulties and bring new complications".

(2) F.O.17/246 Robertson to Bowring April 3, 1856, enc. in Bowring to Clarendon April 13, 1856.

suggested in another despatch a fortnight later, "it would not be inappropriate to let the (Rebel) Chiefs know that we should view with dissatisfaction any movement on their part calculated to disturb us in a place we reside in by Treaty Right".(1) The Chamber of Commerce at Shanghai even suggested that Soochow should also be brought under foreign protection, since as the main entrepôt for trade with the interior, its fall alone would have a serious effect upon Shanghai.(2) For a time trade did suffer badly at the treaty port, although neither it nor Soochow was actually taken by the rebels. Robertson reported at the end of June that "even Opium finds no purchasers", and that tea supplies from the interior were very uncertain. But even the total cessation of trade was, he recognised, "merely one of those chances that all must run whose interests are placed in a country where civil war was raging". What chiefly concerned him was the physical security of British residents, and to secure this adequately,he suggested, the existing policy towards the rebellion needed revision. "Your Excellency's instructions for my guidance have hitherto been to observe a perfect neutrality", he wrote to Bowring"....and so long

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(1) F.O.228/220 Robertson to Bowring (69) April 15,1856.
(2) ibid. enc. in Robertson to Bowring (72) April 15, 1856; also ibid July 12.

as matters go well there can be no question of the wisdom of such a course; but I would respectfully submit, and I hope you will not deem it presumption on my part, that times and circumstances may occur when that policy can be carried a little too far...."[1]

Bowring did not deem it presumption, for such a view fitted in with his own attitude to the struggle going on in China. Forwarding a copy of Robertson's despatch to the Foreign Office, he inverted the consul's argument and told Clarendon that it was not the molestation of British subjects that was to be feared so much as the stagnation of British trade. To secure this, he suggested, "all parties should be interdicted from making the Five Ports the seat of hostilities", and further, "in case of absolute need", the city of Shanghai should be put under the direct protection of the Treaty powers.[2] With the war in the Crimea settled, Clarendon was more sympathetic to complaints from China, and his reply sent in September, 1856, promised more naval forces at Shanghai in future. Moreover, he instructed Bowring to inform the rebel chiefs that,

> "any attack upon the City of Shanghai, which is full of British subjects and property, will be repelled by force of arms; but that the British Government will in no way

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(1) ibid. June 28, 1856

(2) F.O.17/248 Bowring to Clarendon July 5, 1856.

"interfere in the Civil War if the Ports in which British Commerce is carried on and to to which British subjects are admitted are respected by the Insurrectionary Forces".(1)

Clarendon agreed, in effect, that neutrality could be carried too far. The limits of British neutrality were accordingly extended in September, 1856, to include not just the foreign settlement areas at the treaty ports, but the Chinese cities as well.

To exclude both sides from the settlement areas was, as I have already argued, if not strictly legal at least not inconsistent with the stand of neutrality in the civil war; but to forbid one side from attacking "the Ports in which British Commerce is carried on," and from Shanghai in particular, which is what Clarendon's instructions amounted to, was another matter. In actual fact, these instructions were never acted upon at all. By the time they arrived in China, at the end

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(1) F.O.228/208 Clarendon to Bowring Sept. 9, 1856; enc. is Clarendon to Admiralty asking that more ships be directed to Shanghai and their commanders instructed to repel any attack on the city, for "a bona fide observance of neutrality" did not require that British property at Shanghai "be exposed to plunder in a conflict between the rebels and the Imperialists brought on by an attack made by the Rebels upon that City". There was no question of waiting to see how the rebels would behave if they captured the city.

of 1856, the crisis at Shanghai was safely past, and was not renewed until the middle of 1860, when a Taiping attack on the city was made. Shanghai was defended by British forces on that occasion, but not on the authority of Clarendon's instructions, which appear to have been quite forgotten. Bowring had been replaced by Frederick Bruce as British Plenipotentiary in China by then, Clarendon by Russell at the Foreign Office, and Robertson by Meadows as consul at Shanghai. Thus none of the principals concerned in the shaping of British policy at Shanghai in 1856 were on the scene four years later. Bruce, who was a good deal of an armchair diplomat, apparently did not study the consular archives at Hong Kong on his arrival there in April, 1859, and he soon moved on to Shanghai, which became his headquarters until the end of 1860. When the rebels attacked that port in August, 1860, he ordered its defence by British forces quite consciously on his own authority. Russell approved his action, but neither referred to the fact that it had been authorised four years earlier as part of general British policy towards the rebellion, and it would seem clear that they were in fact ignorant of this.(1) Both

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(1) See A & P 1861 (2754) pp 60, 65, 70-1. Bruce was widely criticised for "taking it upon himself" (Lindley, op.cit., vol I p271) to break with the professed policy of neutrality, but he never defended himself by pointing out that he was really only acting on the instructions given in 1856. The person one would have expected to know this and to have pointed it out was E.Hammond, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and the man chiefly responsible for despatches to China, but he does not appear to have done so.

the origin and fate of these instructions seem to me to provide an instructive illustration of the decidedly ad hoc nature of British policy on this question. They were an immediate response to a sudden, local crisis, and when that crisis passed and was not repeated for several years, they were forgotten. Certainly they were not referred to in 1860. Such facts make it difficult to accept the idea of any systematic, astutely planned, British policy towards the rebellion. At times it is difficult to resist the conclusion that it was not made or planned at all, but just happened.

Yet the objection remains that by their very existence on paper, even if never acted upon, these instructions of Clarendon in September, 1856, compromised British neutrality in a decidedly pro-Manchu direction. They made it potentially, if not yet in practice, a neutrality which protected the Manchus. All the ports in which British commerce was carried on and to which British subjects were admitted were at that time in the hands of the Manchu government, and it was impossible to warn the rebels away from them without at the same time protecting the interests of that government, at least unless the ports and the revenues derived from them were completely taken over by the treaty powers. One can, therefore, begin to accept in part the Marxist complaint against the nature of British neutrality towards the rebellion, while still rejecting

such unhelpful adjectives as "false" and "empty". It was not a case of British neutrality being consciously devised to deceive one side and help the other. But given a situation in which the British government was determined and able to protect the interests (generously defined) of its subjects residing in China, and a situation in which those interests were concentrated in ports exclusively in the hands of one side, then British policy could not help but work in favour of that side as against the other. The natural bias in British policy away from the prospect of any change or disturbance in China which might upset British interests there began, by 1856, to turn that policy into a course which ran counter to the success of the Taiping rebellion. But it was not for some years yet that conscious direction and added impetus was given to this trend.

Clarendon's instructions of September, 1856, were certainly not part of any general move towards abandoning a policy of neutrality altogether, however peculiar a character they may have given that policy. This is made plain by Bowring's correspondence with the newly appointed American Commissioner, Dr. Peter Parker, over the latter's attempt at treaty revision late in 1856. In August Parker sought Bowring's co-operation in this venture in a letter stating that he had evidence that the Imperial government contemplated seeking foreign aid against the rebellion, though by indirect means

and "in a manner peculiarly Chinese". Parker urged that if the representatives of the Western treaty powers were now to present themselves at Peking, "most important consequences might follow". Having no warships readily available for such a purpose Bowring was in no position to co-operate, and thought the whole venture hopeless, not to say positively prejudicial to long range Western interests in China. On the question of aid against the rebels he told Parker he was not authorised to make such an offer as that suggested. In his despatch to Clarendon on the question he went even further, stating that, although convinced that British interests in China were seriously endangered by the present state of anarchy in the country, yet he

> "should be less willing than ever to see the British Government interfering with the inter-necine quarrel and step beyond what is necessary for the protection of British persons and property, and the security and extension of trade, nor could I advise participation in that policy of intervention which is darkly indicated in Dr. Parker's despatches".(1)

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(1) F.O.17/248-9 Bowring to Clarendon July 1 and Aug.21,1856, enclosing his correspondence with Parker. For the failure of Parker's attempt at treaty revision see T. Dennett, op.cit., pp 279-91; U.S.Congressional Papers, McLane Correspondence pp 610 ff; Swisher, op.cit., pp 311 ff.

Clarendon replied in November, fully approving Bowring's stand, and rejecting also the idea of offering armed intervention in favour of the Imperial Government as the condition of political or commercial concessions.(1)

On the eve of the outbreak of the second "opium" war in China, therefore, British policy towards the Taiping rebellion was in a rather peculiar position which defies description in simple and usual terms. Fundamentally it remained in intent and application what it had been since 1853, a policy of armed and limited neutrality. Yet the limits of this neutrality had been extended in such a way as to make British policy one which might, in certain very possible circumstances, work in favour of the Manchu government, while on the other hand there was explicit rejection of the idea of offering direct aid to that government. In addition, hopes in the possibility of either side settling the conflict satisfactorily and establishing a firm government conducive to the interests of foreign trade had receded still further from what they had been in 1853-4. If the conditions for the expansion of that trade were to be created it seemed that it could only be as a result of independent Western action.

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(1) F.O.228/209 Clarendon to Bowring Nov. 4, 1856.

Clarendon was in fact preparing for such action just at the time when the case of the lorcha "Arrow" was precipitating the crisis at Canton which led to the outbreak of war. With the Crimean war settled, Clarendon began negotiations with the French government for combined action "to avert the calamities and ruin" facing their interests in China. The object was to be treaty revision, and the means a joint expedition to the Peiho of far greater strength than any previously made. In this way, Clarendon argued,

> "the Treaty Powers will either place their relations with China under the existing dynasty on a better footing than they have hitherto been, or will be set free by the obstinacy of the Chinese Government from any obligation by which they may be morally restrained from adopting measures requisite for the security of their subjects and calculated to extend their commerce with the Chinese territories. Her Majesty's Government are far from desiring to see the over-throw of the present dynasty in China or the success of the insurgents .... but Her Majesty's Government consider that it would be imprudent in the Treaty Powers much longer to remain in a state of listless indifference."(1)

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(1) ibid. Clarendon to Cowley Sept. 24, 1856 enc. in Clarendon to Bowring Nov. 8, 1856.

Just what measures Clarendon had in mind if the Manchus again refused to accept the idea of treaty revision does not emerge in the negotiations as far as they had gone before events at Canton led to action even more direct than a mere show of force at the Peiho. The threat of attempting to make terms with the rebels was perhaps among them, although equally, intervention against the rebels might have proved the outcome. Clarendon was determined to get either concessions from the Manchus, or what he considered moral freedom of action, which could have meant any one of a number of things. Whatever it meant, the French were willing to co-operate in bringing about "une démarche destinée a lever les derniers obstacles qui ferment au commerce et a l'industrie du monde entier le libre accés d'un aussi vaste empire". They were confident that "l'apparition des pavillons des guerres" would quickly bring result.(1)

By the time Bowring received news of these preparations the "pavillons des guerres" were already flying at Canton. In October, 1856, a crisis developed over the seizure by the Chinese authorities of the lorcha "Arrow", and England and France set about securing their objectives by the direct use of force against the Manchu Government. The length of time

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(1) ibid. The correspondence between the English and French Governments is in printed form in F.O.17/261 Clarendon to Bowring Feb. 9, 1857.

taken to build up effective fighting forces in so distant a theatre of war as China, especially since some of the English troops sent out were diverted to help quell the Mutiny in India, meant that despite the vast superiority of the allies in weapons of war it was not until June, 1858, that peace was concluded and the Treaty of Tientsin signed. Even this was to prove far from the end of the struggle, however. Ratification of the new treaty was required by June, 1859, but before then officials favouring the continuance of the war regained control in the counsels of the Manchu Government, and when Bruce, the newly appointed British Minister Plenipotentiary to China, attempted to make his way up the Peiho on his way to present his credentials and exchange treaties at Peking, his naval escort was repulsed with heavy losses by the Taku forts. The war was thereupon laboriously renewed, and Bruce's elder brother, the Earl of Elgin, who had negotiated the Tientsin treaty, was sent back to China a second time as Minister Extraordinary to exact full compliance from the Manchu government. This was eventually secured in October, 1860, the Treaty of Tientsin being then finally ratified and the Convention of Peking imposing additional conditions upon China.

The task of forcing from the Manchu government the diplomatic and commercial concessions demanded by England proved a bitter and protracted one. Apart from the fact that the Manchu govern-

ment renewed the war rather than ratify a treaty already negotiated and signed, other incidents which occurred during the campaign of 1860 exacerbated feelings. In September a number of British and French emissaries negotiating a truce near Tientsin were seized and imprisoned, some of them dying as a result of their treatment, and in October Elgin ordered the burning of the Summer Palace outside Peking to punish what he regarded as a perfidious court. The Emperor himself had fled at the approach of the allied armies at the end of September to Jehol, in Manchuria, leaving his half-brother, Prince Kung, the task of soothing the fierce barbarian. Such a background of deceit and destruction naturally left no great legacy of faith or goodwill on either side. The Manchu government had been forced, very much against its will, to accept new terms on paper by the end of 1860, but its readiness to carry them out honestly remained, for some time yet, highly suspect by the British representatives. Not surprisingly in such circumstances there was no immediate tendency in British policy towards helping this government to suppress a rebellion which, by the end of 1860, had again become a formidable threat to its security.

On the other hand, the existence of a state of war with the Manchus did not dispose the British government to look more favourably on the rebellion, or to give it any kind of encouragement. In October, 1856, rebels near Canton who claimed

to be connected with those at Nanking sought aid from Bowring, but he rejected their request, and Elgin ignored a similar request from a Taiping chief on the Yangtze at the end of 1858.(1) The reasons for this refusal to regard the rebels as possible allies are fairly obvious. Apart from absolute confidence that, having once concentrated their forces in China, military victory would quickly be won, the view of the rebellion formed by British officials since 1853 made any active encouragement of it practically unthinkable. Doubts as to the real nature of Taiping feelings towards foreigners remained, and until 1860 they seemed to have lost all their former military vigour. They were neither desirable nor necessary allies. In any case, in the war with the Manchus it was no part of the British objective, and still less of the French, to overthrow the dynasty entirely. The instructions issued to Elgin on his setting out for the first time in April, 1857, were largely devoted to defining the terms which it was hoped the Manchu government could be "induced" to accept,(2) and even when Elgin had to be sent a second time, after the Manchus had shown their intractability at the Taku forts, the Foreign Office urgently instructed him not to go too far in undermining the

(1) A & P 1857 (2163) p50-1 and A & P 1859 Session 2 (2571) p 454.

(2) A & P 1859 Session 2 (2571) pp 1-6 Clarendon to Elgin April 20, 1857.

authority of the Emperor. If that were to happen,

> "the Rebels would take heart, the great officers of the Empire might find it difficult to maintain the central authority, the governors of provinces might hardly be able to quell insurrection. In short, the whole Empire might run the risk of dissolution. Her Majesty (sic) would see with great concern such a state of things. It might portend a great catastrophe, and the bonds of allegiance once loosened, might never again be firmly united."(1)

Elgin himself wondered at times whether the Manchu government either could or should be upheld in this way, but despite the suspicions of his French colleague, Baron Gros, his instructions on the point were definite. Setting the rebels up in place of the Manchus was never the policy of the British Government, even when at war with the Manchus.

During these years of conflict reports on the rebellion were much less regular than formerly, but they provide unexpected variety. At the beginning of 1857 Robertson wrote one of the few official despatches not from the pen of Meadows in praise of the rebels.

"Under their rule no oppression of the people is allowed", he reported. "The Husbandman cultivates his Land and the

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(1) F.O.17/329 Russell to Elgin April 17, 1860; cf also the French instructions to Baron Gros, enclosed there, "Il ne saurait, en effét, entrer dans nos vues de renverser le Souverain de la Chine.."

produce accrues to himself; taxation exists only in a moderate contribution of grain, and the Rice required for the consumption of the Troops is paid for. District Officers of similar rank and designation as the Imperial Government are appointed to administer justice, and protection to life and property is guaranteed to all who come within the Taeping rule; that this is no promise held out as an inducement but actually the case all accounts lead us to believe, for many find their way backwards and forwards, either as spies or for the purpose of visiting their native places, and they speak of the perfect freedom and immunity enjoyed in the Rebel Districts". Taiping discipline, Robertson continued, "stands out in such bold relief against the fearful demoralization of the Imperial Armies as to instil a feeling of respect into beholders and enthusiasm into its followers".

Despite these great virtues, however, Robertson doubted whether the Rebels could achieve more than partial national reform, and he questioned also whether they really wished to co-operate with foreigners. "The Manchoo Government may be effete and the people demoralized, but at all events the first assures to us a security for life and property insofar as it can, and the last a trade with above nineteen and a half

millions sterling.(sic) Whether the Rebel Government will do as much is a matter of doubt".[1] Bowring was not impressed by Robertson's sudden burst of praise for the rebels, while Clarendon merely expressed interest.

Robertson's enthusiasm did not last long, in any case, for twelve months later he was reporting, in a singularly ill written despatch, that

> "a deep feeling of discontent pervades the countryman, and had the Taiping wang movement had in it any of the elements of progress, any guarantee for an ameliorated condition and peaceful enjoyment of property, the Tartar dynasty would have ceased to exist, but it did not (sic); the people see in it only an exchange of masters, without any benefit to accrue therefrom, and extinction of their religious rites, to be replaced by a formula which threatens religious persecution and the uprooting of their religious systems and institutions".[2]

These were more usual views for a British Consular official, and in harmony with the reports submitted by Wade during 1857.[3]

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(1) F.0.17/263 Robertson to Bowring Jan. 2, 1857, enc. in Bowring to Clarendon Jan.12, 1857; for Clarendon reaction see F.0.17/261 to Bowring March 4, 1857.

(2) F.0.17/294 Robertson to Bowring Jan.6, 1858 enc. in Bowring to Clarendon Jan.13, 1858. Robertson's original despatch in F.0.228/257 reads similarly.

(3) For Wade reports about this time see F.0.17/265, March 14; F.017/269 May 9 and 25; F.0.17/272 Oct.14; F.0.17/273, Nov.29, 1857.

Through the greater part of the following year, 1858, the rebellion received virtually no attention in consular reports. The advance of Chang Kuo-liang's armies forced the rebels still further from the coastal areas, while Western energies and attention were mainly directed towards the campaign against the Manchus.

The rebellion could hardly be forgotten, however, for Article X of the Treaty of Tientsin, signed on June 26, 1858, read,

> "British merchant ships shall have authority to trade upon the Great River (Yangtze). The Upper and Lower Valley of the River being, however, disturbed by outlaws, no Port shall for the present be opened to trade, with the exception of Chinkiang, which shall be opened in a year.... So soon as Peace shall have been restored, British vessels shall also be admitted to trade at such ports as far as Hankow, not exceeding three in number..."

Thus the continuance of the rebellion nullified the chief commercial benefit gained from the recent war - the right to trade upon the Yangtze. But in October, 1858, before leaving for England, Elgin persuaded the Imperial authorities, at the price of modifying the clause in the treaty relating to the residence of the British minister in Peking, to allow him

to make an exploratory voyage up the river and to select suitable ports for foreign trade. Elgin stated that his main object was simply to confirm the principle that the river would eventually be opened, but part of his intention was to investigate afresh the state of the rebellion, about which little had been heard for some time. He left Shanghai on November 8th, returning on January 1st, 1859, after reaching Hankow, six hundred miles inland.

The reports brought back by Elgin and his companions on the rebels served to confirm the official view formed since 1854. The two main points which emerged from Elgin's own report were his conclusion that the Taiping movement now lacked any real popular support, and the total absence of commercial activity observed in Taiping territory as compared with Imperialist.

> "I am inclined to believe that there is little or nothing of popular sympathy with the rebel movement, in the sense which we give to that phrase in Europe. It is no doubt true that the general attitude of the population does not argue much enthusiasm on either side of the dynastic controversy, and it is also certain that we saw more of the districts in Imperialist than those in rebel occupation. But the tone of natives with whom I conversed certainly left on my mind the impression that

"they viewed the rebellion with feelings akin to those with which they would have regarded earthquake or pestilence, or any other providential scourge".

The towns in Taiping hands appeared to be merely desolate garrison centres, although Elgin recognised that in some cases at least this was the inevitable result of their being almost constantly in a state of siege. Yet the contrast with Imperialist held territory was very marked.

> "When we had advanced through the rebel lines greater signs of commercial activity displayed themselves on the river, although I should observe that the rebels do not appear in any part to command it beyond the range of their guns. Nowhere did we see any rebel junks, and both Nanking and Ngan-ching (Anking) were closely beleaguered by Imperial fleets".(1)

For Wade, who accompanied Elgin as an interpreter, it was a "motley, planless insurrection.....without a vestige of capability to reconstruct the edifice it has done something to undermine".(2) The only thing to be hoped for from it was its early collapse.

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(1) For Elgin report see A & P 1859 Session 2 (2571) pp440-5.

(2) T.F.Wade, Account of the Expedition to Han K'au, a copy of which is enclosed in F.O.17/371 Bruce to Russell. April 29, 1862.

A readiness to help towards this end certainly became apparent in official British considerations on the rebellion immediately after the conclusion of the Treaty of Tientsin. Before Elgin's report reached England the instructions to guide his brother as first British minister to China were drawn up. These show that at the beginning of 1859 intervention against the rebellion was considered as a possible development in British policy in China, although still not as a certain or immediate development. In February, 1859, Bruce wrote to the then Foreign Secretary, Malmesbury, setting out the major questions in Anglo-Chinese relations he thought likely to arise after his arrival in Peking. One of the most important of these, he suggested, was "the language I am to use to the Imperial Government with regard to the rebels". Malmesbury made a pencil note opposite this passage in Bruce's letter stating, "I think we ought to help them and drive them out of Nankin - the promise of this would induce them to repay us by good faith &c. It is important that we should open the Nankin trade".(1) The actual instructions he issued to Bruce were, however, rather more guarded.

"It is possible that the Chinese Government may take advantage of your presence at Pekin to endeavour to

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(1) F.O.17/312 Bruce to Malmesbury Feb. 5, 1859.

"ascertain whether Her Majesty's Government would be disposed in any way to assist the Imperial Government in the subjugation of the insurgents now in arms against its authority. The question which would be involved in any such overture would be of momentous importance. On the one hand it would certainly be desirable that peace should be restored to the interior of the Empire, and as a consequence of it the navigation of the Yangtzekiang and access to the cities on its banks opened to foreign intercourse; but on the other hand, in the present imperfect state of our information as to the nature, extent and prospects of the insurrection, it is impossible to judge whether any attempt to serve the purposes of the Central Government by contributing to suppress it might not do more harm than good. If the insurrection were confined to one or two places on the banks of navigable channels it might be assailed by the naval forces of such of the Treaty Powers as might be willing to lend their aid to the Imperial Government, and the capture of a strong position occupied by the insurgents might reinstate the Imperial Government in the plenitude of its power. But even in this case I need scarcely say that Her Majesty's Government would not be disposed to enter upon such a course without previous concert with and without

"the assured co-operation of its allies.

"As far, however, as we are informed, the insurrection is widely spread throughout the interior; it numbers a large population as its adherents; and its strongholds are scattered far and wide and cannot be approached or assailed by any force that the Treaty Powers could bring to bear upon it.

"It is possible that the information which Lord Elgin may collect in the course of his voyage up the Yangtzekiang may give reason to suppose that it would easily be within the reach of the Treaty Powers to restore peace to the interior of China; but in the present state of our knowledge, it would not be proper for you to encourage any expectation of material assistance on our part".(1)

Malmesbury clearly favoured the idea of intervention, but not at any price. He wanted proof that it was likely to be effective even if given on only a limited scale. Elgin's report indicated, though it did not state, that effective aid might be possible without a large and expensive commitment of British fofces, but Bruce's treatment at the Taku forts in June, 1859, meant that any possibility of British action

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(1) F.O.17/311 Malmesbury to Bruce (No.5) March 1, 1859.

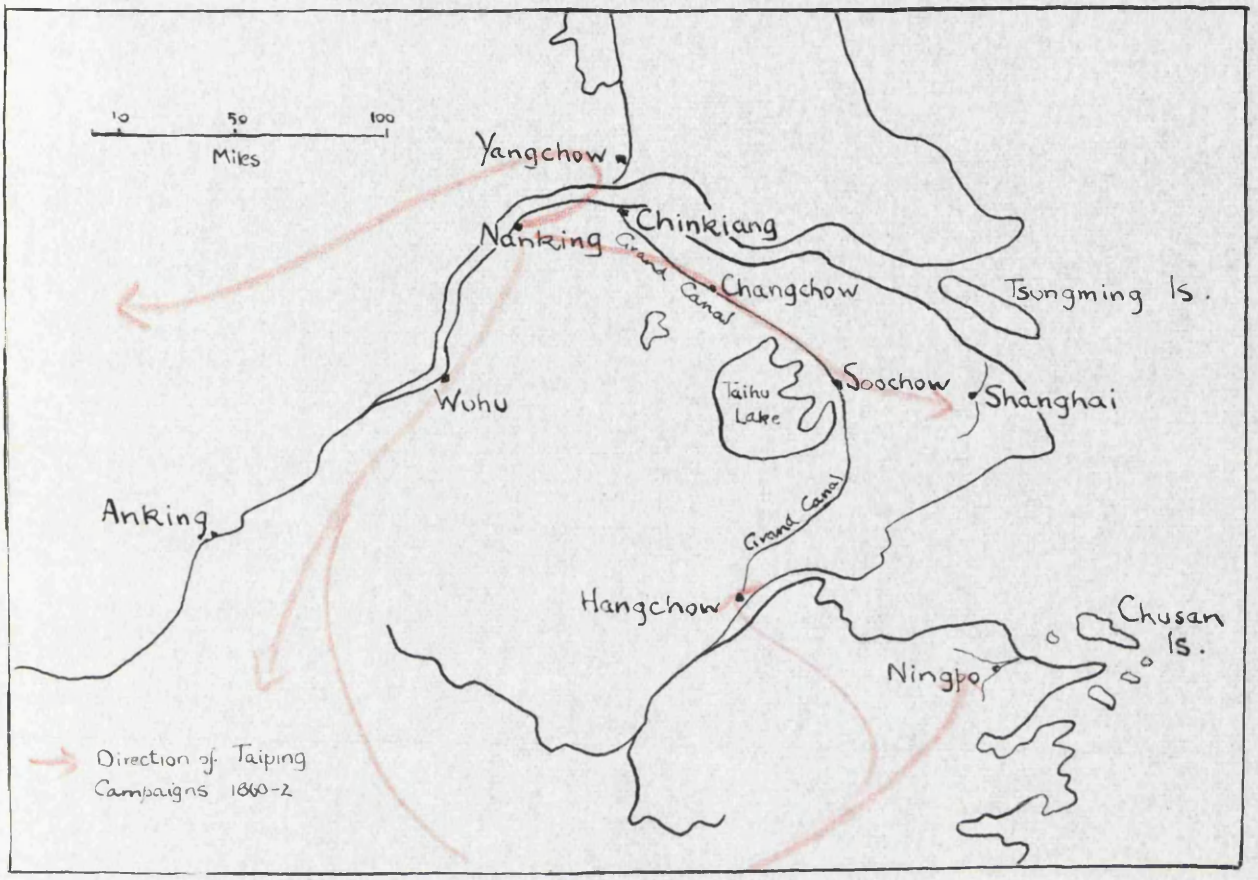
was for the time being discarded. A large and expensive commitment of British forces to China had, in fact, to be made; but they carried war, not aid, to the Manchu government.

The events of 1859-60 served to complicate rather than resolve the immediate problems of British relations with China. The fact that the Manchu government had been prepared to renew hostilities rather than submit to the terms of 1858, perhaps still more its seizure and maltreatment of the truce negotiators in September, 1860, made many question whether it was not completely untrustworthy and better overthrown. Baron Gros certainly suspected Elgin of such thoughts, and by the end of 1860 Elgin was at least as well disposed towards the rebels as towards the Manchus.(1)

By then, indeed, it appeared that the dynasty might be overthrown in any case, if not by the Western barbarians invading its capital and burning its palaces, then by the long haired rebels.

In the early part of 1860 the Taipings had suddenly re-asserted themselves as a formidable military force under

(1) Baron Gros suspected Elgin of having secret instructions and reported on Oct. 19, 1860, "il agit comme s'il cherchait a rénverser la Dynastie pour tendre la main aux rebelles de Nanking" (see H.Cordier L'Expedition de Chine de 1860 pp 200,397-400). As already shown, Elgin's instructions explicitly enjoined upon him not to overthrow the dynasty, but for his more sympathetic view of the rebellion by the end of 1860 see below p137-9 .



H.B. Morse and H.F. MacNair, Far Eastern International Relations (1931) p. 235.

THE MAIN AREA OF CONFLICT 1860-4

the brilliant leadership of the Chung Wang, or Loyal King, Li Hsiu-ch'eng. In May the Imperial armies besieging Nanking had been routed and Li's forces advanced triumphantly towards the coast, capturing Soochow at the beginning of June. In the latter part of the year they over-ran the rich coastal province of Kiangsu, attacking Shanghai itself, and began also a great four-pronged drive towards Hankow, in an attempt to relieve the strategically vital centre of Anking and to lessen the pressure from Tseng Kuo-fan's armies driving slowly down the Yangtze. Despite the brilliance of Li's generalship, the superior resources and organisation of Tseng's armies eventually withstood this challenge and, by the end of 1861, these were ready to advance to the third and final siege of Nanking. The military resurgence of the Taiping movement thus proved abortive. But this was not apparent at the end of 1860, when rebel armies were ranging through wide tracts of Imperial territory on the coast and along the Yangtze, while in the north the armies of the Western barbarians were occupying the capital. It is not surprising that Elgin, on the eve of his entry into Peking, wrote to his brother, then still at Shanghai, questioning whether it was wise for Bruce to move north and attempt to take up residence in the northern capital, thus identifying

England diplomatically with a regime that appeared to be "tottering to its fall".(1) As in 1853, the political future of China seemed all uncertain, and this uncertainty affected the development of British policy towards the rebellion. In some measure, the chances of British intervention on behalf of the Manchu government were more remote at the end of 1860 than they had been at the beginning of 1859.

Against this must be set the fact that in August, 1860, British forces were used to prevent the Taiping rebels capturing Shanghai. In May, just before the capture of Soochow, the Chinese authorities at Shanghai requested foreign aid against the advancing rebels, and to this Bruce, in conjunction with the French minister, Bourboulon, agreed, although refusing to go beyond the defence of Shanghai itself. There is some doubt whether the rebels were fully aware of the allied intention to defend the city, and Li Hsiu-ch'eng claimed

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(1) F.O.17/331 Elgin to Bruce Oct. 12, 1860 enc. in Elgin to Russell, same date. Elgin wrote "There are also circumstances connected with the general condition of affairs in China at present and the prospects of the existing dynasty which cannot be overlooked in dealing with this subject. Is it advisable to take a step which will identify Great Britain more closely with this dynasty at a time when it seems tottering to its fall?"

that he was actually invited to advance upon it by foreigners visiting him at Soochow. Whatever the truth on these points, the rebels attacked Shanghai on August 18th over a period of three days, and were repulsed by British and French forces, the latter incidentally firing a suburb outside the walls to deprive the Taiping forces of cover.(1) While some allied forces were thus defending an Imperial city in central China, in the north their brothers in arms were storming the troublesome Imperial forts of Taku, preparatory to an advance on Tientsin and Peking. It is difficult to apply the normal criteria for neutrality and belligerence to so Gilbertian a situation.

Yet although certainly a breach of neutrality in any normal and acceptable sense of the term, the British action at Shanghai in August, 1860, did not mark a radical change in policy towards the rebellion. Insofar as it was intended merely to defend Western interests at Shanghai it was of a piece with the action taken in 1854 at Muddy Flat, with the difference that it was now the rebels who were attacked as threatening those interests, while in addition, what the

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(1) For Bruce and other reports on the situation at Shanghai in mid 1860 see A & P 1861 (2754) pp 60-2, 68-70, 101, 129 - 36 etc.

British government regarded as the legitimate limits within which it might use its forces to defend those interests had been extended to a point at which they could not help but include Manchu interests also. But the action of August, 1860, was not intended, nor did it become, as did a similar action in January, 1862, the starting point of a conscious and deliberate policy of active intervention against the rebellion on behalf of the Manchu government. British policy towards the Taiping rebellion was entering a sort of shadowy no-man's land somewhere between neutrality and active hostility.

It seems to me, therefore, over simple to say that "precisely in 1860" British policy towards the rebellion changed, or that the Manchus had "no sooner" been forced to accept the new treaty dispensation than the British government and its representatives in China began to supply them with aid. The best proof of this lies in an examination of British policy during 1861, but even looking at the situation as it was at the end of 1860 it cannot be said that abandonment of the admittedly peculiar, presumptuous and imperfect kind of neutrality followed since 1853 was a certain or immediate development. The repulse of the Taipings from Shanghai was an isolated response to an immediate crisis such as had threatened in 1856, not part of a general campaign

against the rebellion such as a similar crisis provoked in 1862; while the evidence of renewed vigour in the rebellion itself on the one hand, and of the continued weakness and obstinacy of the Manchu government on the other, left many doubts and questions as to the possible future political developments in China, including the future of British policy towards the rebellion. Would the Manchu government really abide by the new treaty settlement? Was the resurgence of the rebel movement permanent, and more than military? Was it possible to negotiate with them, and would they recognise British trading interests and treaty rights in China? Was intervention, in fact, really necessary? Was it, in any case, possible to intervene effectively without a large and expensive commitment of British forces, such as Malmesbury had hesitated over early in 1859?

These were the kinds of question which had to be answered before the British government was likely to be prepared to commit itself to a policy of active intervention against the Taiping rebels, and there were certainly no easy, sure answers to them at the end of 1860. There can be no argument that the conclusion of a satisfactory treaty settlement with the Manchu government by that time made a policy of aid and support to it far more likely, or that most British officials in China, especially Bruce, took a very hostile view of the

rebellion. But it is misleading and unhistorical to argue back in the knowledge that aid was in fact eventually given on a significant scale to the conclusion that this was settled British policy at the end of 1860.. The terms of the political equation in China had been radically altered by the war of 1856 - 60, but they still did not add up beyond all question to intervention against the Taiping rebellion by the British government.(1)

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(1) The situation in Japan about this time provides an interesting parallel with that in China. There also England had concluded a treaty in 1858 with a government reluctant to concede or fully implement trading and diplomatic concessions, and which was faced by a powerful rebellion. England remained neutral in the struggle between the Tokugawa Shogunate and the rebellious Western fiefs, but was, if anything, disposed to favour the latter. The main difference, apart from the much smaller British interests at stake in Japan, was in the assessment made of the rebel movement there. The Western fiefs, in contrast to the Taipings, were believed to be capable of establishing a firm government over the whole country and thus ensuring, at least as well as the existing government, the conditions for trade. This indicates that, had the Taipings in China been considered as comparable in point of political capacity and organisation to the Western fiefs in Japan, the simple conclusion of a satisfactory treaty with the Manchu government would not have secured it active British support. On the British attitude to the rebellion in Japan see W.G.Beasley Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy (1955) Introduction pp 77-84; also E.H.Norman Japan's Emergence as a Modern State (1940) pp 45-6.

CHAPTER V

The Attempt to By-pass the Rebellion (1861)

British policy during 1861 did not proceed on the assumption that it was absolutely necessary to assist the Manchu government in destroying the Taiping rebellion before the new treaties could be implemented satisfactorily. On the contrary, its main concern was to get the treaties operating despite the rebellion, with the co-operation of the rebels where necessary, but without actively intervening in the dynastic struggle between them and the Manchus. The established policy of limited neutrality was re-affirmed, negotiations were carried on with the rebels to allow British vessels on the Yangtze to pass through the territory under their command, and there were suggestions for getting the agreement of both sides to the neutralisation of the treaty ports, although these were not very thoroughly pursued.

Yet although the main trend in British policy was towards making the best of things as they were, it must also be admitted that there was a strong tendency towards helping to change the situation by aiding the Manchus in some way. There was, however, no sustained attempt to do this in fact, as happened in 1862. For the first twelve months or so after the ratification of the treaties, British policy was experimental

and rather uncertain. The experiment was in treating with the rebels as a de facto power in the Yangtze valley; the uncertainty was both about whether this was a really workable policy, and also about whether its alternative, helping the conservative and suspicious Manchu government, was likely to further British interests in China. By the early months of 1862 the experiment in treating with the rebels was held to have failed by all those concerned in the making of British policy, while on the other hand the Manchu government, if not exactly inspiring confidence, seemed at least a better prospect as an ally than at the end of 1860. The major question in British policy then became, not whether to intervene, but how far to do so.

The movement of British forces in China during 1861 provides convincing evidence of the absence of any positive intention to intervene against the rebellion as soon as the Manchus had given way over the Treaty of Tientsin. The argument of some writers that the forces used to defeat the Manchus were all kept conveniently at hand, first to ensure that the Manchus observed the treaty and then to help crush the Taipings, is one of those less than half true statements which seem convincing enough at a distance (after a hundred years there is not much difference between 1860 and 1862), but which hardly tally with the dull, but relevant, administrative facts and figures of the time to which they

refer.[1]

About 21,000 British troops, one-third of them Indian, were concentrated in China during 1860. Of these, about 16,000 were in the expeditionary force which conducted the campaign in the far north, but immediately following the ratification of the Treaty of Tientsin 10,000 men of this force were embarked to return to India and England. Thus, at the end of 1860 there were about 11,000 British and Indian troops in China, 4,250 of them in the garrisons retained at Tientsin and the Taku forts, 1,200 at Shanghai and the remainder at Hong Kong and Canton.

Even the maintenance of a force of this size, the War Office pointed out in April, 1861, absorbed a considerable part of the indemnity payments received under the treaty, especially since the presence of Indian troops meant that special rates of pay were made to the English troops.[2] Although admitting that the question of evacuation could not be peremptorily settled in England, given the disturbed and uncertain conditions in China, both the War Office and the

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(1) E.g. Holger Cahill, A Yankee Advanturer (1930) p 286 says "The troops used in that war and which were being held in China until the indemnities should be paid were available for use against the Taipings"; also Lo Erk-kang, cit. below p 181 . For sources of figures quoted below see Appx. C.

(2) F.O.17/363 W.O. to F.O. April 20, 1861.

Foreign Office, not to mention the Treasury, were anxious to reduce the number of troops retained there as quickly as possible. In September it was down to 9,500 and the War Office was instructing the commander, Sir John Michel, to send back to India without delay all troops from that country.(1) A few weeks later, after news of the death of the Hsien Feng emperor was received, these orders were temporarily withdrawn, but by the end of the year, nevertheless, the total force was down to about 6,000. A suggestion made by Michel about that time that barracks be built at Shanghai and a permanent garrison established there was rejected, partly on the advice of Elgin, now appointed Viceroy to India.(2) On this suggestion Bruce wrote to Michel that, although he was of "decided opinion" that it was not safe to leave Shanghai undefended, even if arrangements were made with the rebels, yet he thought that the total force retained in China should not be calculated to perform "any other service than the retention of Taku and the protection of Shanghai".(3) The naval strength of the East India and China station was also considerably reduced over this period, from 66 ships with a total

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(1) F.O.17/366 W.O.-F.O. correspondence of Sept.26, 30; cf. Oct. 9, 10.
(2) For correspondence on this see F.O.17/367 W.O. to F.O. Dec. 27, 1861 enclosing Michel report and F.O.17/380 Jan. 9, 20 (for Elgin), 31, Feb. 5, 18, 1862.
(3) F.O.17/357 enc. in Bruce to Russell Dec. 31, 1861.

complement of nearly 8,000 men in March, 1861, to 38 ships with a complement of little over 4,000 twelve months later. Thus both the detailed figures of British forces in China during 1861 and the comments of British authorities upon the general question of military establishments there show that, although there was a concern to provide for the adequate defence of Shanghai, there was certainly no intention of maintaining or building up a large force for a future offensive campaign against the rebellion.

Lord Elgin, who had actually negotiated in 1858 and forced the ratification in 1860 of the treaty which is said to have "sealed the fate" of the rebellion, certainly did not advocate keeping large forces in China for this purpose. On his return to England early in 1861 he told the War Office that he thought that a force of 5,000 English and French troops combined should be enough to enforce the treaty and to secure indemnity payments, and that the garrison at Tientsin then being maintained could dispense with "as much force as is necessary to garrison Shanghae and Canton, if it is decided to maintain troops at those places".(1) How far Elgin was from imagining that, the Manchus having now been dealt with, the next step was to settle the rebels, is further indicated

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(1) F.O.17/363 W.O. to F.O. April 20, 1861, quoting Elgin's views.

by his correspondence with his brother at the time of his leaving China. On December 11th, 1860, he wrote to Bruce from Shanghai, and, after discussing customs problems and indemnity payments, stated,

> "Then there is this rebel business. How is that to be managed in the absence both of yourself and me? I confess that I incline to the opinion that there is more of 'avenir' on the Rebel than on the Imperialist side - bad as they both are. I saw yesterday a missionary who has been at Nankin. To much of what he said I do not attach great importance. But some facts were material. He declared that there was perfect order all through the rebel country... The country people were bringing provisions and being paid... They are also beginning to conciliate Catholics.... Then they have behaved very well over the trade. £5 million of property belonging to merchants has passed this year through the country belonging to them, and not a shilling's worth has been taken. This is evidence both of honesty and power. It never will do to come under any obligation not to communicate with them on the Yangtze. It would be wrong in principle to do so, and impossible in practice to

"carry out such an engagement".[1]

For Elgin, sensible negotiation, not hostility or suppression, was the proper policy for England to follow towards the rebels.

Bruce did not share his brother's rather open minded view of the rebels, and replied that if Shanghai and its customs house were permitted to fall into their hands indemnity payments under the recent treaty would lapse, and friendly relations with the Imperial government be impossible to establish.[2] Elgin disagreed, and wrote from Point Galle (Ceylon), at the end of February, 1861,

> "Then again as to the Rebels - the system of keeping Shanghae out of their hands by a permanent European occupation (and at present, I confess, I see no end to it) is an evil of great magnitude, though perhaps less of a one than letting the rebels in unless they become really masters of the country.... I do not quite agree with you in thinking that the occupation of these places by the rebels would necessarily cause us to lose our indemnities, because I think they would always be ready to purchase our neutrality by undertaking all the obligations enjoined on the Imperial Government by the new Treaty and Convention".[3]

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(1) Elgin Correspondence (Broomhall), Elgin to Bruce Dec.11,1860
(2) F.O.228/281 Bruce to Elgin Dec. 29, 1860.
(3) Elgin Correspondence (Broomhall) Elgin to Bruce Feb.28,1861.

It would be false to suggest that, had Elgin remained as British minister in China instead of Bruce, later British policy towards the rebellion would have been very different from what in fact it became, for his rather favourable view of the rebels at this stage was certainly largely a reaction from his recent experience of the Manchus. But these letters indicate quite plainly that there was no pre-determined British policy towards the rebellion, ready to swing into operation as soon as the treaties with the Manchu government were finally settled. There was certainly room for two opinions about the future prospects of that policy among its leading agents in China.

On the later working out of that policy, Elgin himself had little influence, while Bruce certainly never shared his kinder, second thoughts about the rebellion.(1) But even Bruce did not go to Peking, early in 1861, ready to plan a joint campaign with the Manchus against the Taipings. In January, while he himself remained for a time at Tientsin, he sent the Chinese Secretary to the Legation, Thomas Wade, on

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(1) For Bruce's hostile reports on the rebellion during 1860 see A & P 1861 (2754) pp 91, 101, 129-33; also F.O.228/281 to Elgin Aug.26, 1860, "The true representatives of the traditions and institutions of China are the existing Government, and I have more hopes of progress being effected through the fears of the former than of any good to arise from arrogant and ignorant men whose system reposes on pretensions dictated either by fanaticism or blasphemous fraud".

to the capital for preliminary talks with Prince Kung, who was still the chief representative of the Manchu government there, in the continued absence of the court. Kung was soon to be appointed first head of the Tsungli Yamen, the board of experts on "barbarian affairs". (though according to the Treaty of Tientsin, art. LI, that term was no longer to be used in Chinese official documents), which was to become the Chinese equivalent of a Foreign Office. But despite this move towards setting diplomatic relations with the Western treaty powers on a more normal - that is, Western - basis, the refusal of the Hsien Feng emperor to return from Jehol to Peking after the conclusion of peace, or to acknowledge in any way the presence of non-tributary foreign representatives in his capital, naturally fed British doubts that the new settlement had still not been accepted in good faith by the Manchus.(1) Therefore Bruce, although certainly himself

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(1) See esp. Bruce to Wade Feb. 9 1861, enc. 6 in Bruce to Russell March 12, 1861 in F.O.17/350 - "If the Emperor will only return and show that he really accepts the treaty and the principle of International equality and of friendly intercourse which he has consented to on paper, I should hope to get rid of the occupation soon. But while he holds aloof from his capital...I cannot state to my Government that everything is settled, that there is no fear of reaction, and that the troops may be therefore withdrawn... The events of 1858 and 1859, the rupture of negotiations last year, the circumstances attending the capture of the prisoners and their subsequent treatment will produce a profound feeling of distrust in Europe of the intentions of the Chinese Government, and nothing will overcome it

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very hostile to the rebellion and anxious to conciliate and re-assure the shaken Manchu government, felt it necessary to instruct Wade "not to press the rebel question too much".

"It is for them to adopt such measures for their preservation as the means at their disposal allow" he continued. "But we are not going to furnish them directly with aid to put down this insurrection, and I do not wish them to infer from any apparent anxiety on our part, that our interests are much involved in a solution favourable to the existing government. Our interests really suffer from the protraction of the contest and the anarchy that it produces throughout the country. Were tranquillity restored under any government the industry and "labor improbus" of the Chinese would soon re-animate production and commerce. The Rebels have not declared themselves against trade with foreigners, nor could they carry out such a system were they to do so. The present dynasty

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continuing (1) from previous page...
short of some decided step on the Emperor's part which will show both China and Europe that his attitude towards foreign nations is changed. In short, if the Emperor is really anxious to put himself straight with Foreign Nations and to be able to direct his whole resources against his domestic foes, he will lose no time in himself coming forward and giving personally by his acts an unequivocal proof of the course he intends to pursue in the future in this matter".

"must be irremediably blind and impracticable if the distracted state of the country is not in itself a sufficient motive for keeping on good terms with us. I should despair of putting things on a satisfactory footing if they were to make active co-operation a condition of friendly relations. Don't allow your attentions to be engrossed with the dynastic avenir of China. Our business is to work the Treaty through with this Government while it stands, to avoid committing ourselves to either party as partisans in the conflict, and to treat the rebellion, in conversation with the members of the Government, as an affair with which we have nothing to do and in which we cannot, consistently with our respect for the independence of foreign states, take any part. The 'hundred names' (i.e. the mass of the people) and they only must settle the question". (1)

These instructions of Bruce to Wade show that at the beginning of 1861 the essence of British policy towards the rebellion was still very much what it had been since 1853 - a wait and see policy of limited neutrality.

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(1) F.O.17/350 Bruce to Wade Jan. 26, 1861, enc. 5 in Bruce to Russell March 12, 1861.

Wade reported a discouraging apathy and indifference among officials in the capital towards "the disease of the south". Their main concern was not with the distant Taiping rebellion, "which they evidently regard as next to chronic", but with the Nien rebellion in the Shantung area, so much nearer the capital. He received what he called "the usual query as to whether we would and how we could help them", but he was careful to insist that any aid given would be "moral rather than material", and contingent upon the commencement of diplomatic relations in earnest. "The Prince did his best to prove that the hindrance the rebels offered to our trade justified our action against them", Wade added, "but this I could not either allow". (sic) (1) The new era in British relations with the Manchu government under the Treaty of Tientsin certainly did not begin with joint plans for the suppression of the Taipings.

It was always possible, however, that such plans might be made by the Manchus with other powers, and British action be prompted as a counter to these. About the turn of the years 1860-1 there was much discussion among high officials of the Manchu government of a Russian offer of naval aid against the rebels, but this was met by British officials in

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(1) ibid., enc 7-8 Wade to Bruce Jan.11 and 20,1861.

China not by a similar and larger offer but by warnings to the Manchu authorities of the dangers involved in using foreign forces at all.

Arguments in favour of accepting the Russian offer were advanced most vigorously by the Imperial Commissioner in charge of commercial affairs at the treaty ports, Hsüeh Huan. Hsüeh maintained that although the expenses involved in using the barbarians might be great, so also were the expenses of the present campaigns against the rebels, while the issue might be more speedily settled. Further, Hsüeh argued, the English and French were fearful of the Russians, and if the Chinese made an alliance with the latter this could help to curb the pride of the English especially. "This is the method of using the barbarian to control the barbarian".(1) Tseng Kuo-fan was much more qualified in his support, pointing out that China's weakness was on land rather than on water, and that it would be of little use for Russian vessels to attack Nanking before Chinese land forces were in a position to to-operate effectively. When China's armies were better placed, Tseng suggested, the Russian offer might be accepted, but the terms should be clear and precise, and agreed upon well beforehand.(2)

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(1) IWSM. HF. 71, 1a-3b.
(2) IWSM. HF. 71, 9b-12a; also Swisher, op.cit., pp689-92.

Opposition came most strongly from the Director General of Grain Transport, Yuan Chia-san, who expressed the fear that the barbarian might ally himself with the rebel, with whom he had religious affinities, and that his covetousness would only increase. Yuan also raised practical difficulties, such as the problem of supplies, and questioned whether the barbarian would accept orders from the Chinese. Altogether, the harm was likely to be great and the advantages slight.(1) In an Imperial edict issued early in January, 1861, ordering Prince Kung and other officials in the capital to look further into the question, these opinions were reviewed, and although Yuan's objections were judged to have some reason it was considered that the Russian offer should not be rejected outright, and that there was possible advantage to be had from it.(2)

That in the end it was not followed up was due in part at least to the advice of Wade. On January 24th, a few days after having talks with him, Prince Kung and his chief assistants in handling foreign affairs at this time, Wen-hsiang and Kuei Liang, submitted a memorial reviewing the question and the opinions received upon it, and advising strongly against

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(1) IWSM. HF. 70, 18b-20 and HF.71 34b-37.

(2) IWSM. HF. 71, 12a-13b; also Swisher, op.cit., pp692-3

the acceptance of direct foreign aid. The Russians were, in the well worn official cliché, "unfathomable" and the French, from whom a vague offer of assistance had also been received, were crafty and covetous. Both would make demands even before doing anything, and there was always the possibility of fresh "border troubles" breaking out with them before the trouble in the heart of China was settled. Altogether little trust was to be put in them, as Russia's recent usurpation of territory showed. The English "chieftain" Wade was then quoted as revealing "the truth of the matter".

> "The suppression of the rebels is really something for China to handle", Wade was reported as saying. "If others lend aid, what profit will there be in it for them if they do not occupy territory? It is not only that Russia and France might recapture territory and be reluctant to give it up, but even if England also did so he would not dare to say that she would not occupy it for herself. The seizure of India by England was a case in point!. Although what this chief says is not absolutely sincere," Kung and the others commented, "yet what your officials are afraid of has already been seen".

They went on to commend Yuan Chia-san's viewpoint rather than Tseng Kuo-fan's or Hsüeh Huan's, and to suggest that rather than use foreign forces directly, munitions and ships

might be purchased as a means of "ensnaring" the barbarian and preventing him from turning to the rebels.(1)

The edict which followed this important memorial stated that, given the suspicious nature of the barbarians, their overtures should not be too brusquely rejected, lest they create new troubles. "All we can do is tell them that (at present) China's military strength is enough to handle the task of suppressing the rebels, but if in future the occasion for assistance arises, we shall naturally borrow help from them. In order to control them, "the edict continued, echoing the recent memorial, "we should devise means of entrapping them, enticing them to us by petty gain".(2) Tseng and Hsüeh were accordingly instructed to look into the question of buying or hiring foreign arms and vessels. But the idea of the direct use of foreign forces, among whom it should be noted the British were not mentioned as possibilities, was for the time being dropped. Besides a deeply ingrained suspicion and fear of the foreigner, Wade's revelation of "the truth of the matter" was an important influence in this.(3)

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(1) IWSM. HF. 72, 3a-8b esp 4b-5a; also Swisher pp 693-8.

(2) IWSM. HF. 72, 9b-11a esp 10a.

(3) The importance attached to Wade's warning is indicated by the fact that when the question of using foreign forces was re-opened in January, 1862, it was again referred to in an Imperial Edict - see IWSM. TC. 3, 49b.

Apart from Bruce's instructions to Wade and the latter's talks with Manchu officials in Peking, developments elsewhere also indicated no intention to change British policy towards the rebellion immediately following the treaty settlement. In December, 1860, during the first of many panics at the prospect of a rebel advance on Ningpo, Bruce told the consul there that he did not feel authorised to order the defence of that port, and instructed him that, in the event of an attack, British naval forces should not interfere beyond protecting British subjects.(1) In other words, the defence of Shanghai in August, 1860, was not to be taken as a precedent for the other treaty ports. In fact, British policy at this point had retreated somewhat from the stand taken by Clarendon in September, 1856, when he had instructed Bowring to warn the rebels to respect "the Ports in which British Commerce is carried on", which seems to imply an intention to defend all the treaty ports, not only Shanghai. Later in 1861 Russell was to suggest to Bruce that "it might be expedient to defend the Treaty Ports if the Chinese would consent not to use those ports for purposes of aggression", but it was not until March, 1862, that the defence of all the treaty ports was explicitly ordered.(2) During 1861, with the exception of Shanghai

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(1) A & P 1862 (2976) p2.

(2) ibid p 60 Russell to Bruce Sept.7, 1861; cf ibid p.111.

and Tientsin, where garrisons were placed, only the foreign settlement areas were to be defended by British forces. At the end of the year Ningpo was in fact captured by the rebels without any opposition being offered by British naval forces there, or, for that matter, by the Imperial forces.

Again, at Shanghai itself in January, 1861, Meadows, who had been acting consul there since July, 1859, refused to co-operate with a French suggestion that allied forces be used to clear the rebels from a 12 to 15 mile radius around the port, and his stand on this point was approved by the Foreign Office.(1) Further, both the Foreign Office and the War Office insisted that no payment should be exacted or accepted from the Manchu government for the expenses incurred in the defence of Shanghai in August, 1860, as Bruce had at first proposed, lest this lead to misapprehension and "induce the Imperialists to suppose that we are prepared to quit our neutral position and to take part with them in the Civil War".(2) For the British government, neutrality was still the official policy.

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(1) F.O.17/361 Meadows to Russell Feb.19,1861 and F.O.17/348 Russell to Bruce April 22, 1861.

(2) F.O.17/349 Russell to Bruce July 5, 1861. Further on this issue of payment for the defence of Shanghai note F.O.17/363 W.O. to F.O. April 20, enc. report of Maj.Gen.Grant who said the Chinese authorities at Shanghai paid the cost of erecting defences and quartering troops; F.O.17/354 Bruce to Russell Aug.7, 1861, who said he believed the Commissariat paid the expenses; also A & P 1861 (2754) p250 Bruce to Russell, Oct. 28, 1860.

The main trend in British policy at this stage was, in fact, towards treating with the Taipings as the power in actual occupation of territory of vital importance to British trade. This is clearly shown by Rear-Admiral Hope's first expedition up the Yangtze in February. In December, 1860, the Chinese authorities had agreed to a request from Bruce that the river be opened to trade, despite the provision in article X of the Treaty withholding this until the rebellion was settled, on condition that the Imperial government be not held responsible for the protection of British trade, and subject to regulations designed to prevent the smuggling of arms to the rebels.(1) Elgin, as almost his last official act before his departure from China, requested Hope's assistance in "the establishing of an understanding with the rebel leaders at Nankin which may secure British vessels passing up and down the river from being molested or interfered with by persons acting under orders from them". He was confident of rebel co-operation, but emphasised to Parkes, who went as

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(1) A. & P 1861 (2777) pp 1-4. Wade's reports from Peking in January, 1861, expressed the belief that the Manchu government hoped England would get involved in difficulties with the rebels and was therefore ready to open the river to trade. In a memorial on the question dated Dec.2, 1860, Prince Kung stated that "since this is a period when treaties have just been exchanged the barbarians still have their doubts (about us). (We should) take special care to get them on our side so that treachery and cunning will not reveal themselves and other troubles develop...If we placate them adequately now, not only will we not have to worry about their being harmful to us, but they could even be of use to us". (IWSM. HF. 70, 4b-5a.)

interpreter, that one of the conditions for success was "that we should maintain an attitude of strict neutrality between the Imperial Government and the rebels".(1) Hope took ten ships with him, the size of the expedition being partly determined by his intention to establish consulates at Chinkiang, Kiukiang and Hankow, and to station vessels to regulate the trade at each of these ports, as well as at Nanking. He left behind two of the largest vessels available, partly on account of their draft, but partly also to avoid imparting to the expedition "a belligerent aspect which I think it very desirable to avoid".(2) As a result of this expedition three new consulates were established and an agreement was concluded with the rebels permitting British vessels to pass through the territory under their control if holding river passes, copies of which would be sent to Nanking. It was agreed that a British naval vessel might be stationed at the rebel capital to regulate and protect the trade, and also that if in future the rebels should attack any of the river ports, or any other places where British trade was carried on, they would not molest British subjects, while

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(1) A & P 1861 (2840) p 1-3.
(2) ibid p 5. Hsüeh Hüan expressed some fears about this expedition, but an Imperial Edict in reply stated that, "The English have just exchanged treaties with China, and although they will not help to eradicate the rebels they are not likely to connive with them and start hostilities again". The danger would be if foreign merchants hired their vessels to the rebels to transport them to the north. (IWSM. HF. 73 28a-29a, 31a - b).

British authorities at those places would be instructed not to interfere in any hostilities. In addition, although less readily, the Taipings agreed that during the current year their forces would not approach nearer than two days march (about 30 miles) to Shanghai. This promise later gave rise to what seem to me unwarranted charges of bad faith against them, when they did attack Shanghai again in January, 1862. But for the time being a satisfactory working arrangement had been reached on the basis, as Hope expressed it in his report on the expedition, "that in the districts of country of which they hold possession, the Taeping authorities must be regarded as those of the de facto government, and must be dealt with accordingly".(1) Provisional Regulations, permitting British vessels to trade freely upon the Yangtze as far as Hankow, subject only to inspection designed to prevent any trade in arms, were published on March 18th, and the river was thrown open to trade.(2) The object

(1) A & P 1861 (2840) p 7. Hope to Admiralty March 8, 1861. For reports of the negotiations with the rebels see ibid pp 7-9, 32-3 and A & P 1862 (2976) pp 10-15. On the question of the duration of the agreement note translation of a Taiping edict in A & P 1861 (2840) 32-3, which instructed rebel commanders not to attack the ports "for the present year"; Bruce also spoke of the agreement as being "for a twelvemonth" (A & P 1862 (2976) p56; cf p103).

(2) For regulations see A & P 1861 (2840) pp18-21. There was nothing in them forbidding trade with rebel centres, and the notification of Parkes attached to them seems to imply that such trade was expected to develop.

of British policy at this stage was not to get rid of the rebellion as the necessary condition for the development of that trade, but rather to get round it as conveniently as possible.

Of course it remained an unwelcome obstacle, and official reports upon it were still almost wholly condemnatory. Hope in the same despatch in which he defined his de facto approach to the rebels also stated that he could regard them "in no other light than that of an organised band of robbers". Parkes, at greater length, reported that their government, insofar as they could be said to have one, appeared to be "a pure military despotism", without any settled system of administration. Soldiers and slaves were the only two classes of population in Nanking, which was more an armed camp than a seat of government. "It is clear", Parkes added, "that the behaviour of men of this stamp towards foreigners cannot always be counted on".(1) Against such views Meadows argued in favour of the rebels. The Manchu dynasty had received its "death blow" in the recent war, and it was of the utmost importance to find "some other power in the nation to take its place". The Taipings, Meadows held, were the obvious alternative, and although he

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(1) See A & P 1862 (2976) pp 23-35 for Parkes' report.

thought no direct steps to encourage them should be taken, action against them would be disastrous to British interests in China, as well as expensive. The usual criticisms levelled against the Taipings by foreigners, for example that they fired on white flags, were based on Western conditions and assumptions, not Chinese. The general attitude of the rebels towards foreigners was more encouraging than that of the Manchus, and there was "a long succession of irrefragable proofs that the Tae-pings do earnestly desire friendly commercial intercourse with us".(1)

In addition to Meadows, a much more recent recruit to the consular service, R. J. Forrest, presented a report in March which is worth noting. Forrest travelled overland from Shanghai to Nanking, in order to join Hope's expedition. He therefore passed through a considerable tract of territory recently conquered by the rebels, and may be assumed to have had better opportunities for observation than interpreters who merely descended from ships to parley with rebel chiefs at a few river towns, usually in

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(1) ibid pp 3-6. Meadows to Russell Feb.19, 1861. On Meadows later transfer from the key Shanghai consulate see below, Appx A. Despite a marked tendency to deduce inevitable historical consequences from a few facts philosophically interpreted, Meadows' general approach to China was much more advanced and freer of assumptions of total Western superiority than most of his contemporaries. It seems to me, though, that his very favourable view of the rebellion was formed early and never took enough account of possible changed in the movement, and was based as much as anything on his long standing antipathy to the Manchu government.

a state of siege. The picture Forrest drew of the countryside under Taiping control was not one of chaos or anarchy. He heard much of the melancholy effects of the Taiping advance into Kiangnan in 1860, but things were returning to normal by March, 1861.

> "The rebel authorities pay a visit to the rural districts once a month, and exact a tribute of cash or rice from the inhabitants of the villages. Regularly appointed officers are appointed in all important places, in whom the people seem to have confidence, and unless some new military operations disturb Nanking, the villages around it will soon become peopled, and the land resume its fertile appearance".

At Nanking itself, he reported, building was going on, "and people who have known the place before say that a marked improvement is taking place....The authorities assert, with some show of truth, that the rulers are now giving their attention to the formation of a fixed order of government, and to the improvement of the condition of the people; measures impossible before because of the Imperialist army".(1)

There were, then, two views on the rebellion and its prospects still to be found in official reports, but only

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(1) For Forrest's report see A & P 1861 (2840) pp27-30; for his generally more tolerant view of the rebellion than most consular officers see also Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Dec.1867, pp 187-8.

just two views. Meadows and Forrest represent what was very much a minority opinion which did not seriously disturb or qualify the judgments of their superiors. Which was right is a question I will not attempt to pursue here. The rebellion had many faces, but although the prevailing Consular view of it can reasonably be criticised as always ready to assume the worst and as making insufficient allowance for the military exigencies of the movement, it was, nevertheless, based on a variety of reports, first hand and second hand, official and non-official, which, by the middle of 1861, were nearly unanimous in condemning the rebellion as purely destructive from practically every point of view.

Certainly for Bruce, now established at Peking, the weight of evidence was overwhelmingly against the rebellion. "All classes of observers", he told Russell in June, "seem unanimous both as to the destructive nature of the insurrection and as to the blasphemous and immoral character of the superstition on which it is based". If the rebels succeeded, China "would be reduced to a mass of agriculturists governed by a theocracy supported by armies collected from the most barbarous and demoralised part of the population", and the commercial prosperity of the country, including foreign trade with it, would receive a fatal blow. It was in no sense

a popular, national rising, and was, indeed, irreconcilable, not only with the Manchu dynasty but with the whole traditional fabric of Chinese civilisation. The difficulty was that the Manchu government, "though undoubtedly more generally acceptable to the Chinese people, properly so called, than its competitors the Taepings", was supine and inefficient, so that, despite its superior resources, no confidence could be felt in its ability to triumph. The logic of all this was that they should be given some sort of assistance, but Bruce did not as yet suggest this to the Foreign Office.(1)

Bruce was, in fact, in a considerable dilemma as to the best policy to follow in the circumstances. He complained in a letter to his brother in August,

> "The ignorance and arrogance of this Government combined make it impossible to act with safety on the calculation of what is for their interest, while the effect of falling back on the Taepings will only be to ruin our trade. The mind gets weary and stale in attempting to solve a problem which admits of no solution, except that of events".(2)

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(1) A & P 1862 (2976) pp52-3 Bruce to Russell June 23, 1861.

(2) Elgin Correspondence (Broomhall) - Bruce to Elgin Aug. 24, 1861; cf also A & P 1862 (2976) p45 Parkes to Hammond June 12, 1861, "It is difficult indeed to see what is in the future. Rebels and Imperialists appear to me to be almost equally hopeless....the principal difference between the two parties appears to be that whereas the Government can govern (that is, know how) but do not, the rebels do not govern because they cannot".

Events, indeed, rather than Bruce's own will, were to resolve his problem, which was well illustrated by a long letter he wrote to Hope in June.(1) In this he switched from one to another possible alternative policy without firmly recommending any. The strict non-intervention usual in cases of civil war was attended in China "with far more than ordinary hazard and risk to our trade", but he thought that the home government would "probably abstain from rendering active assistance to the Imperial Government, both on account of the assurances of neutrality we have given to the insurgents, and on account of the serious and indefinite consequences to which such intervention would in all probability lead". Another possibility was to take all the treaty ports, or at least the chief ones, completely under foreign protection, but this had its difficulties also. "The insurgents would naturally object that in leaving the revenue and administration of these places in Imperial hands we do in reality assist the Imperialists", while Bruce saw little prospect of persuading the Emperor to regard them as completely neutral cities and to abstain from using them as bases for offensive operations. In any case, he asked, how could such a principle be enforced upon the rebels? Could a purely

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(1) See A & P 1862 (2976) pp 56-9.

naval force keep them in check, "with chastisement at their capital in case of hostile movement on any of the ports?" This suggestion of possible direct action at Nanking was, it may be noted here, decidedly rejected by both Hope and the Foreign Office.(1) Thus three possible lines of policy were outlined by Bruce - strict non-intervention, active assistance to the Imperial government, and the neutralisation of the treaty ports backed by a readiness to use naval force at Nanking to enforce this - and none of them seemed completely acceptable or practicable.

Bruce concluded his uncertain analysis by stressing the importance of avoiding "partial collisions" with the rebels lest this create a feeling of animosity in them towards foreigners, "which does not seem to exist at present". Moreover, were such collisions to lead to a serious blow being struck by British forces without instructions from home,

> "on the one hand Her Majesty's Government would not approve of being committed without being consulted, and on the other we should lose a favourable opportunity of placing our relations with the Emperor on a satisfactory footing, if we were deprived by some incidental event,

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(1) ibid p 60.

"of the power of making our aid a matter of bargain with the Imperial Government".

Bruce obviously felt that aid to the Manchu government was the ultimately logical policy for England to follow, but that it should not be involuntary or unconditional aid. He wanted it to be given in such a way as to achieve more than simply the suppression of a troublesome rebellion.(1) At this stage, however, he was not prepared to take a strong initiative himself in the direction of intervention, both for fear that the Foreign Office would not approve, and because of his doubts whether, given the attitude of the Emperor to the recent treaty settlement, it would effect any fundamental improvement in British relations with the Manchu government.

Rear-Admiral Hope, the other main influence in China on the shaping of British plicy towards the rebellion at this time, had greater faith than Bruce in the possibility of negotiating effectively with the rebels. One of the reasons in addition to tactical considerations that he gave for rejecting the idea of a naval attack on Nanking was that so long as the rebels held that city as the seat of their power they would be easy of access;

"and from such experience as our short intercourse has afforded, I see a fair prospect of our acquiring sufficient

(1) For further discussion of this point see below pp 181-3 .

"influence with them to enable us to carry all points which are essential to our commercial interests, even to that of eventual abstinence from the Consular ports".(1)

Hope believed that it was, in any case, unwise to provoke the rebels, since they were in a position to cut off tea and silk supplies coming down to Shanghai. Despite one or two "incidents",(2) large supplies of these commodities continued to reach Shanghai, and many merchants shared Hope's views on the dangers of interfering against a rebellion which, for all its unwelcome aspects, yet allowed trade to continue. Bruce, however, expressed his surprise that trade should continue at all, and was "not so sanguine as to our influence with the Tae-pings being sufficient to save our trade from injury".(3)

It was Hope also who had first urged the neutralisation of the treaty ports as the best approach from the British point of view, arguing that so long as they continued as trading centres, "the ingenuity of the Chinese would not fail to devise modes by which the produce of the country would be brought there in defiance of every obstacle".(4)

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(1) A & P 1862 (2976) p 60; on Hope's policy see A.Michie, The Englishman in China (1900) vol I pp 375-80.
(2) For examples see A & P 1862 (2976) pp 62-3 and F.O.228/311 Medhurst to Bruce Aug.10, 1861.
(3) A & P 1862 (2976) pp 68, 70.
(4) A & P 1861 (2840) p.10 Hope to Admiralty April 6, 1861.

The Foreign Office was impressed by this possibility, and in July instructed Bruce,

> "to endeavour to make arrangements to secure the neutrality of all the Treaty ports against the rebels.
>
> "The Government of Peking will, probably make no difficulty in abstaining from using the Treaty ports as bases of operations against the rebels, provided the rebels on their side refrain from attacking these ports; and it may be hoped that the rebels will see that it is not for their interest to run the risk of collisions with foreign nations whose trade is protected by Treaties.
>
> "You will understand, however, that Her Majesty's Government do not wish force to be used against the rebels in any case except for the actual protection of the lives and property of British subjects".(1)

But so long as the Manchu government was left free to continue to collect the rich customs revenues of these ports, especially Shanghai, it was hardly reasonable to expect the rebels not to attack them in return simply for a guarantee that they would not be used as bases of attack. Bruce, as already indicated, was aware of this, and thought Hope's suggestion impracticable.(2) So far as I can discover,

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(1) A & P 1862 (2976) p22 Russell to Bruce July 24,1861.
(2) ibid pp 17, 57.

Bruce made no very serious effort to win Imperial acceptance of the idea, despite Russell's instructions. He held firmly to the view that the Manchu government was still the legitimate and established government in China, to which alone he was accredited and with which alone treaties had been made.(1)

England had no right to attempt to deprive the Imperial government of its claims upon the treaty ports, whether as sources of revenue or as bases of operations, and he rejected all suggestions for doing so, as for example Medhurst's plan in July, 1861, for placing Shanghai under an Allied Commission which should collect the customs duties and place them in trust, "on account of the future government, whatever it might prove to be, whether rebel or Imperialist", after deductions had been made for indemnity payments and administrative expenses.(2)

Thus the idea of putting the treaty ports completely outside the field of conflict, either by getting the agreement of both rebels and Imperialists or by the Allies taking them over themselves, came to nothing. By the end of 1861 the "neutrality" of these ports meant simply a demand by the British authorities that the rebels stay clear of them without any compensating guarantee that the Manchus would be

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(1) See for example ibid p51 Bruce to Russell June 22,1861, and F.O.228/281 Bruce to Elgin Aug.31, 1860.

(2) F.O.17/354 Medhurst to Bruce July 28,1861 enc. in Bruce to Russell Aug.7,1861. For similar proposals and reactions see also F.O.228/281 Bruce to Elgin Aug.31,1860; F.O.228/327 Medhurst to Bruce Jan20,1862; A&P 1863 (3104)pp87,92.

prevented from making use of them. Bruce really held to this view all along; Hope and the Foreign Office came to accept it without argument later. It was, virtually, a denial of belligerent rights to the rebels so far as certain key cities in China were concerned, and as such, quite inconsistent with a profession of strict neutrality.

Certain other aspects of British policy at this time also show that, although the main emphasis was upon still avoiding direct involvement in the struggle and upon testing the possibilities of a modus vivendi with the rebels, there was a strong inclination towards helping the Manchus in some way, short of active intervention. In May, for example, naval forces under Captain R. Dew were sent to Ningpo to help re-organise the defences of that port. Although British forces were still not to be committed beyond the defence of British subjects and property, advice was given to the Imperial authorities as to the best use of their resources, guns were mounted on the walls, and Imperial soldiers trained in their use. Acting upon instructions from Hope, Dew also obtained a promise from the rebel chiefs in the vicinity that they would not attack Ningpo during the current year. This served to confirm Hope's belief that, although the Taiping movement

> "can only be viewed as that of a banditti bent on free quarters and plunder, yet sufficient organisation exists among them to admit of the hope that, by a due admixture of firmness and conciliation in dealing with them, they may be deterred from interfering with our Consular ports and trade".(1)

The fact that the rebels did attack Ningpo within the year, despite this promise, was one of the main reasons for Hope and the Foreign Office coming to the conclusion that the Taipings "did not appreciate the nature of bonds and obligations".(2) But for the present, unlike Bruce, they continued to believe in the possibility of negotiating the security of the treaty ports and foreign trade. The negotiations were, however, very one-sided. The rebels were half persuaded, half warned to keep away from Ningpo, while the Manchus on the other hand were advised about its defence.

There was also apparent in the latter half of 1861 some sign of a milder view being taken of the enlistment of British "volunteers" on the Imperialist side. In the early part of 1861 the American filibuster, F.T.Ward, began recruiting the mercenary force which was later to receive Imperial recognition under the name of the Ever Victorious Army, and which was

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(1) A & P 1862 (2976) p46; on aid in organising defences of Ningpo see ibid pp 16,46-50, 143.
(2) P.D.vol 168 (1862), col.62; also F.O.17/380, memo of Feb. 22,1862. The government claim that the Taipings had failed to observe agreements was challenged by Earl Grey see P.D.168, Cols 883, 899 exp.

later still to pass under the command of "Chinese" Gordon. Ward's activities were at first strongly disapproved of by the foreign consuls at Shanghai, both as a breach of neutrality and because he encouraged seamen to desert their vessels. Bruce reported "with satisfaction", but prematurely, the disbandment of this force at the beginning of July.(1) Russell, however, wrote in August that since the Chinese people appeared to be better off under the Manchu government than under "the so called National Party", if the Emperor were to establish "an Imperial Legion of Foreigners" there would be no reason to object to British subjects entering it.(2) The Neutrality Ordinance of 1855 was still being enforced in China at this time, and under its provisions nine British subjects who had been enlisted by Ward were sentenced to nine month's imprisonment at Hong Kong. But since a similar charge against other men for serving on the rebel side had been dropped, these men appealed for a remission of sentence, and in this were supported by Bruce.(3) The legal position on the question of British subjects serving either side in the struggle was, in fact, rather obscure, but Russell's despatch of August, 1861, indicates the existence of readiness

(1) A & P 1862 (2976) pp 60-1. Bruce to Russell July 3, 1861.
(2) F.O.17/349 Russell to Bruce Aug. 8, 1861.
(3) F.O.17/355 Oct.1, 1861. There were some doubts in England whether the Ordinance was still in force (see F.O.17/383 F.O.-C.O. correspondence July 1, 1861 and P.D.vol.174 (1864) col.1511-2), but it seems to have been applied in China still.

to release British subjects in favour of the Imperialists which was to become quite explicit later.

The issue of Revised Regulations for British trade upon the Yangtze at the end of 1861 also illustrates how Bruce's general policy of seeking to win the confidence of the Manchu government and its willing co-operation in implementing the new treaties made him ready to approve measures which weakened the prospects of the rebellion. The original regulations issued in March, 1861, had thrown the whole river open as far as Hankow, and had not set any limits to the trade beyond making provisions against arms running. The result was that trade with rebel centres soon developed, and as early as July Tseng Kuo-fan was complaining that the capture of Anking might be delayed, since supplies were reaching the besieged rebels from vessels flying foreign flags.(1) Prince Kung accordingly began negotiations with Bruce for the stricter control of British trade upon the river, with the result that new regulations were issued in December. These specifically limited the right of British vessels to trade to only two ports above Chinkiang, namely Hankow and Kiukiang, and shipments of goods classified as war supplies, including hemp, oil, timber, steel and iron, were subject to inspection, as

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(1) IWSM. HF. 80, 14a - 15b.

well as the arms carried.[1] These stricter regulations aroused the complaints of British merchants in China, who saw them as an invasion of their established treaty rights, but Bruce insisted that the presence of British trade upon the Yangtze at all, while the rebellion continued, was an extension of those rights and an act of favour on the part of the Manchu government, which had every right to demand that the trade should not become a source of strength to the rebels. The original regulations of March, 1861, Bruce later told Russell, "would certainly have done much to perpetuate the disorder prevalent in the centre of China, which it is as much our interest as that of the Chinese to see put down."[2] The Foreign Office supported Bruce against the complaints of British merchants, so that, although British trade on the Yangtze continued still, it became one of the objects of British policy from the end of 1861 on to help the Manchu government prevent the rebels from benefitting from it.

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(1) See A & P 1862 (2976) p.70 ff.

(2) A & P 1863 (3104) p.80 Bruce to Russell August 24,1862; also F.O.17/355 Bruce to Russell Oct.26, 1861. For merchant complaints and F.O.support of Bruce see A & P 1863 (3014) pp 121-2, 156-8.

British policy was thus strongly weighted in favour of the Manchus during 1861, but was still one of neutrality, at least in the sense that there was no active intervention against the rebellion. The change in that direction came about in the early part of 1862, primarily as a reaction against the renewal of rebel attacks upon Shanghai. But before that certain other events helped provide the condi-tions for the abandonment of the former policy. The first of these was a change, more apparent than real, within the Manchu government itself after the palace revolution of October-November, 1861. The Hsien Feng Emperor died at Jehol in August, refusing to the last to recognise the presence of Western diplomats in his capital and surrounded by advisers of conservative, anti-foreign viewpoint. From among these a Regency Council was appointed to govern for his successor, a child of only five. A struggle for power quickly developed between this Council and the Empress Dowager, the famous "Old Buddha" as she was later called, who received the support of Prince Kung. The return of the court to Peking at the end of October, a move long advocated by Prince Kung, became the occasion for a coup d'état which replaced the original Regency Council by a smaller Council, dominated by the Empress Dowager and of which Kung also was a member.

In a decree issued to justify this coup, members of the former Council were condemned among other things for their part in the seizure of the allied emissaries in 1860, and for their alleged misrepresentation to the Emperor of the attitude of the foreign powers towards China. It naturally appeared to Bruce and other Western observers, therefore, that the more enlightened and conciliatory party in Chinese counsels had triumphed over reaction, and they greeted the change with high approval. It constituted "the most favourable incident that has hitherto taken place in the course of our relations with China", Bruce reported to Russell, and he was encouraged to hope that the old style difficulties which had stood in the way of easy diplomatic relations with the Manchu government would soon disappear.(1)

Like most palace revolutions, the struggle between the Regency Council and the Empress Dowager was over power rather than principle, and there was no real success for a party of reform and conciliation. At the time, however, the emphasis in British comments and reports was upon the triumph of "Prince Kung's party", and the argument was quickly advanced that more direct support should now be given to the existing government of the empire.(2) Bruce himself was far

(1) F.O.17/356 Bruce to Russell Nov.12, 1861.
(2) See for example North China Herald Dec.21, 1861 (cit.Morse op.cit. vol II p63n) - " at this particular juncture we are more than at any other period of our connection with China bound to support the existing government of the empire..."

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from advocating such aid immediately. Indeed, in January, 1862, after receiving reports of the fall of Ningpo, he complained vigorously of a government still "too enervated to act and too proud to beg assistance openly".(1) But on the whole there was a real, if rather short-lived improvement in official British opinion about the Manchu government. "The new administration does certainly manifest a disposition to grapple in a more bold and practical spirit with its difficulties", Bruce reported at the end of February, while in the House of Commons in March, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Layard, assured members that "within a very short time a very great change had taken place" in the government at Peking, and used this as an argument to help justify the abandonment of neutrality.(2)

While the prospects for effective co-operation with the Manchu government seemed thus improved, the possibility of maintaining a working arrangement with the rebels was weakened, in the judgment of British officials, first by events at Ningpo and later, and more decisively, by events at Nanking

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(2) cont'd from previous page.. etc.); also see S.Lane Poole Life of Sir Henry Parkes (1894) vol I pp460-2 - "a marvellous coup d'etat...a new era can dawn upon this distracted land" (Parkes to his wife Oct.30, 1861)

(1) this page. A & P (1862 (2976) p143 Bruce to Russell Jan 18, 1862.

(2) F.O.17/370 Russell from Bruce Feb.23,1862 (also F.O.17/372 June 20); and P.D.vol 165 (1862), col.1812.

and Shanghai. In December, 1861, the long feared rebel attack on Ningpo took place, and a treaty port passed for the first time under Taiping control. The official British reaction to this was two-fold. On the one hand it was regarded as disturbing evidence that the rebels could not be relied upon to keep clear of the treaty ports, even when they made an agreement to do so; and on the other hand it was seen as providing a useful test case, an opportunity "of ascertaining by positive experience whether it would be possible to conduct trade from a seaport held by the Taipings". (1) Bruce instructed the consul at Ningpo, to seek answers to such questions as,

> "Do they show any disposition to govern and organize the country? Do they wish to encourage trade? Are the orders of their leaders obeyed? Do the respectable and wealthy classes of Ningpo return to the city and resume their avocations? Are property and life respected, or is the city treated as an orange to be squeezed dry and then thrown away? In short, is their administration a hand to mouth affair, or is it conducted so as to show that they understand that to form a government, the wealth and the industry of the country must not be destroyed?

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(1) A & P 1862 (2976) p 82 Hope to Admiralty Dec. 7,1861; also ibid p 143, Bruce to Russell Jan.18, 1862.

"For information on these points I look with anxiety."[1] Ningpo became an experiment in direct relations with the Taipings.

It was, perhaps, hardly a fair test, unless the rebels were to be given some time in which to consolidate their gains from the threat of an Imperial counter attack. Furthermore, the consul, Harvey, for all his protestations to the contrary, appears to have been a far from unprejudiced observer, and his reports, although commended by Bruce, illustrate the official British view of the rebellion by this stage in its most extreme form.[2]

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(1) F.O.17/370 Bruce to Harvey Jan. 18, 1862 enc. in Bruce to Russell of S.D.

(2) For Harvey's strong predisposition against the rebels see A & P 1862 (2976) pp 82, 107, 112; When presented with conflicting reports of rebel behaviour at their capture of Hangchow (Dec. 29, 1861), Chinese informants reporting wholesale massacres, European reporting not, Harvey himself had no doubt that "Hangchow suffered most dreadfully" (F.O.228/326 Harvey to Bruce March 18, 1862; cf.Hummel op.cit. vol I p461 and Forrest in JNCBRAS Dec.1867 p 188); he first reported no customs adminstration whatever being set up by the rebels at Ningpo, but when challenged on this admitted that "a pseudo-Customs establishment" had existed (A&P 1863 (3104) pp76-7; cf Wesleyan Missionary Notices May, 1862, p 72 where a Wesleyan missionary reports visiting the Taiping Customs house in January, 1862); and he judged the "tone" of rebel replies to British communications at Ningpo to be much more offensive and challenging than did other interpreters (A&P 1862 (3058) pp38,46-7). The validity of Harvey's reports were several times challenged in parliament (see P.D.167 col.1617; 170 col.1786; 172 col. 318). For Bruce commendation of his report quoted below see A& P 1862 (3058) p18; cf A.F.Lindley's analysis, op. cit., vol II pp 521-5.

"Three months have elapsed since Ningpo fell into the hands of the insurgents", he reported to Bruce in March, 1862, "and from the hour of its capture to the moment when I am penning these lines, not one single step in the direction of 'good government' has been taken by the Taepings; not any attempt made to organize a political body or commercial institutions; not a vestige, not a trace of anything approaching to order, or regularity of action or consistency of purpose, can be found in any of their public acts; the words 'governmental machinery' as applied to Taeping rule, have no possible meaning here; and in short, Desolation is the only end obtained, as it always has been wherever the sway of the marauders has had its full scope, and their power the liberty of unchecked excess.....The Taeping rebellion", Harvey concluded, "is the greatest delusion, as a political or popular movement, and the Taeping doctrines the most gigantic and blasphemous imposition as a creed or ethics, that the world has ever witnessed.....I look in vain in the darkest ages for a similar faction and upheaving of men; but there is nothing in past records so dark and bad... The ravings of John of Leyden and his impious Munster adverturers in 1534-6 are left far behind in the race of folly by the Tae-ping madmen.....Taepingdom is a huge mass of 'nothingness'.... There is nothing

to lay hold of in it. It is a gigantic bubble, that collapses on being touched, but leaves a mark of blood on the finger".(1)

It is hardly surprising that Harvey's reports were challenged by defenders of the Taipings in England, but they were accepted by his official superiors as proving beyond all question the impossibility of looking to the rebels to provide a government under which trade could develop profitably.

While these conclusions were being drawn from the situation at Ningpo a crisis had developed in British relations with the rebels after Hope's second visit to Nanking at the end of December. Hope's object in making this visit was to secure firmer guarantees from the rebels that they would not attack any of the treaty ports not already in their possession, whether on the coast or along the Yangtze. But his approach on this occasion was far less accommodating than in March, for he demanded this without offering any guarantee in return that the Imperialists would be prevented from using these ports as bases. Parkes, who again accompanied Hope as interpreter, confessed himself in some perplexity about the matter in a letter to the Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Hammond, and felt

(1) A & P 1862 (2992) pp12-16 Harvey to Bruce March 20,1862.

that "nothing less than hostilities would appear to have been resolved on unless the rebels do just as they are directed". In threatening to defend all the treaty ports against rebel attacks Hope was indeed going beyond any instructions received up to that time, as was pointed out by Hammond in a note on Parkes' letter. But Palmerston, then Prime Minister, added a second note on January 18th, 1862, to the effect that,

> "These Rebels are Revolters not only against the Emperor, but against all laws human and Divine, and it seems quite right to keep them away from the Treaty Ports. That is all that it is necessary to say to them. Those Treaty Ports are under the authority of the Imperial Government, and we have no right to prescribe in what way the Emperor shall use them".(1)

Hope's initiative in adopting a tougher line towards the rebels was readily approved and confirmed by the government at home.

The rebels refused to do just as directed by Hope, and insisted that the agreement made in March, 1861, to keep their forces two days march from Shanghai was not binding beyond that year. This claim, although questioned

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(1) F.O.17/360 Parkes to Hammond Nov. 23, 1861, with memos attached.

by Parkes, seems to have been justified. They refused to extend the agreement in any way, but on the contrary made plain their intention to advance upon Shanghai. To this Hope replied by warning them that they would incur "not merely a repulse, as on a former occasion, but such further consequences as your folly will deserve".(1) Nevertheless, shortly after Hope's return from this unsatisfactory interview, large rebel forces under the Chung Wang approached Shanghai in the middle of January, 1862, and without actually storming the city itself, overran the countryside around, including Woosung and Kaokiao which commanded the approach to Shanghai from the Yangtze river. Their object, Hope believed, was to reduce the city by depriving it of supplies. By the end of February he was leading the available British forces, in co-operation with Ward's force and the French, to clear the Taipings from the immediate vicinity of Shanghai, and was recommending still more extensive action.(2) At the beginning of March Bruce was justifying the need for offensive action also,(3) and by the beginning of May, the Foreign Office, necessarily several months behind developments in China, was convinced that "events have proved that the

(1) For Hope report on this visit see A & P 1862 (2976) pp97-104.

(2) A & P 1862 (2976) pp 157-8 and A & P 1862 (3058) p.10.

(3) A & P 1862 (3058) pp 6-7 Bruce to Russell March 4, 1862.

British Treaty with China cannot be carried into effect where the Taepings have possession. They have spread so much terror and devastation wherever they have gone that no trade can be carried on in the Districts which they occupy".(1)

Thus, under the immediate pressure of a Taiping threat to Shanghai at the beginning of 1862, the attempt to get round the rebellion, which was the basic feature of British policy during 1861, was abandoned in favour of an attempt to destroy it. There is no single, clearly marked point at which this can be said to have taken place, nor was the change in policy complete and consistent in every detail. A British consular representative remained stationed at Nanking at least until the end of 1862,(2) and there were suggestions, never followed up, for a possible renewal of negotiations with the rebels,(3) But broadly

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(1) F.O.17/382 F.O. to W.O. and Admiralty May 6, 1862.

(2) For presence of a British Consular official at Nanking during 1862 see F.O.17/375 Bruce to Russell Nov. 22, 1862 enc. letter of resignation from G.T.Lay after his "miserable existence" in a boat "scarcely fit for a Chinese to live in", and with little correspondence to carry on with the Taiping authorities.

(3) The suggestion of a possible renewal of negotiations with the rebels after they had been "chastised" at Shanghai came, surprisingly, though perhaps consistently with his rather wavering line on the question, from Bruce, but was rejected by Hope. (see A & P 1862 (3058) p20 and A & P 1863 (3104) p.9).

speaking, the early months of 1862 saw the real and decisive change in British policy towards the rebellion. The policy of neutrality laid down in 1853, qualified and imperfect as it was in the first place, and applied in a manner increasingly favourable to the Manchu cause, was now more or less explicitly abandoned in favour of a policy of deliberate intervention against the Taipings. The major issue in British policy on the question during 1862 became how far and in what manner to help towards their defeat.

CHAPTER VI

INTERVENTION (1862-4)

Few now argue, as most Western writers on the subject once did, that foreign intervention was the decisive factor in the defeat of the Taiping rebellion by 1864. Nevertheless it continues to be recognised as of primary importance, and it is generally assumed that, being important aid, it was also very extensive aid. Morse, for example, wrote that China had been "rescued" from the rebellion "mainly by foreign aid" which, he added, was "given grudgingly in 1860, but with no sparing hand in the years 1862 and 1863 ..."[1] Chinese historians have never seen the matter in this light, and have emphasised such things as the deficiencies and divisions of Taiping leadership, their strategic errors, and the campaigns of Tseng Kuo-fan's forces, rather than the role of the Ever Victorious Army. It is notable, however, that Chinese Marxist historians, while not elevating the intervention of the Western powers into the main reason for the defeat of the rebellion, do give it very considerable weight and, like Morse, suggest that it was on a very substantial scale. By 1862, Lo Erh-kang writes,

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(1) H. B. Morse, International Relations of the Chinese Empire, vol.II, p.111.

"the foreign invaders had armed forces they could use (against the Taipings). Retained in China to ensure that the Manchu government followed the Peking treaties were the English and French armies, while the Americans organised a Foreign Legion. Besides this, after the defeat of the uprising of 1857-9 in India, England was able to send part of her armed forces from there to China. So in the Spring of 1862 England began big scale military action against the Taiping State, and a new phase in her interference began".(1)

"Big scale" and "with no sparing hand" are, of course, relative judgments, which need not be taken too literally, but it is important to recognise that the British government had neither the intention nor the resources to attempt more than limited action in China in 1862. In certain respects at least, British aid was given to the Manchu government with a hand deliberately sparing rather than otherwise.

Bruce in particular urged strictly limited intervention, for he was thinking beyond the immediate question of the

(1) Lo Erh-kang, op.cit.,p175. For Chinese Marxist historians' assessment of the importance of foreign aid in the defeat of the rebellion see Hu Sheng, op.cit.p51, and Fan Wen-lan, T'ai-p'ing Tien-kuo yün-tung (1949) p45. Chinese Nationalist historians do not give it nearly so much emphasis. Cf., for example, Hsiao I-shan Ch'ing shih (1955), pp118-21 and Huang Ta-shou Ching-kuo chin-tai shih (1953) vol I, pp 499-514. Cf. M.N.Roy, op.cit., p162 - foreign intervention "was solely responsible for the defeat of the revolution". Also Li Chien-nung, Political History of China (1956) pp79-80; cf. also Lo Erh-kang, T'ai-p'ing T'ien-kuo shih kang (1948) pp76-7, 102-8, where Lo does not much stress the importance of Western intervention in the defeat of the rebellion.

suppression of the rebellion, major problem though that was. His great object, while British Minister at Peking, was to secure the adherence of the Manchu government in spirit as in letter to the new treaty settlement. He hoped thereby to create a situation in which the treaties would be applie d, not under the constant threat of superior Western force, though he recognised that for a long time to come this must remain their ultimate basis, but under a government able and willing to co-operate to this end.(1) It needed to be an able as well as a willing government. Bruce did not wish to see preserved in Peking a weak, corrupt and incapable government which could be easily browbeaten into giving way to every Western demand. Such a government would simply invite rebellion from its own subjects and, ultimately perhaps, partition by ambitious Western powers. China would then become a second Turkey, a field for imperial rivalries of the most dangerous kind rather than for peaceful, profitable trade.

"I am fully convinced that we, who neither seek territory nor promote by arms religious conversion, have little to apprehend from any success that may attend our efforts to

(1) Note, for example, F.O.17/339 Bruce to Alston Dec.31,1860, where he defined his approach as being designed to convince the Manchu government, "that our objects are essentially pacific, that our demands are reasonable, and that we are inclined to be moderate and conciliatory if we are met in a corresponding spirit...I have set my heart on effecting this change, and I am persuaded that the interests of our trade, and of China herself, require that it should be made without delay". See also F.O.17/372, Bruce to Russell, June 20,1862. W.Davies, op.cit. ch.7 develops this aspect of Bruce's policy.

"raise the Chinese Executive out of its present helpless condition", Bruce told Russell in March, 1862. "....Nor do I consider that it will be a matter of regret or hostile to our interests, that China should be encouraged by a consciousness of her strength, to use bolder language in defence of her just rights. The weakness of China, rather than her strength, is likely to create a fresh Eastern Question in these seas".(1)

The basic object of Bruce's policy was simply to provide for the future security of British interests in China with as little trouble and expense to the government at home as possible. For that a friendly and efficient government in Peking, capable of enforcing the treaties, willing to do so, and at least strong enough not to invite partition at the hands of ambitious powers, was essential. His programme of aid against the rebellion was part of his programme to help create such a government in China.(2)

(1) A & P 1862 (3058) p9. Some British officials were very doubtful of any policy of strengthening the Manchus' militarily, at least until it was more certain that the treaties would be fully observed and other reforms carried out. See Parkes to Thurlow Aug.11, 1862, in Elgin Correspondence (India Office), Private Secretary's Correspondence, Bundle 9, No.838, and also H.N.Lay, Our Interests in China (1864) pp63-4.

(2) "With a view to the permanent improvement of our position in China, and the permanent security of our vast interests here, the object to be arrived at is the re-organization of the Executive of the Chinese, simultaneously with its recognition of our rights, so that it may be able to tranquillize the country, by making itself respected, and be able to give us that protection which by Treaty it is bound to give us in the exercise of our Treaty rights....Our future position in China is involved in the success of the experiment". (Bruce to Rear Ad.Kuper,Nov.22,1862 in A&P 1863 (3104)pp146-7)

As the later history of China sufficiently shows, Bruce failed in this object. The Manchu government was neither effectively reformed in itself nor really reconciled to the presence of the West. The "break-up of China" remained a constant possibility throughout the later nineteenth century, and British trade there was always dependent upon the presence of British gunboats. The difficulties in the way of success for Bruce's plans were indeed formidable, as was the opposition he aroused. British merchants and missionaries who looked for quick returns under the new treaty settlement were critical of a policy which at times seemed more concerned to protect Manchu interests than their own. He had also to curb consuls, brought up under the old dispensation, who were quick to call upon the nearest gunboat to force satisfaction from the local Chinese authorities when faced with what they considered an infringement of the treaties. If grievances were to be handled in this way, Bruce objected, not only might it lead to general hostilities, as in 1856, but there was little point in having a diplomatic representative to the central government in Peking.(1)

(1) For merchant complaints against Bruce's policy see below Ch.8 and N.Palcovits, Old China Hands and the Foreign Office, (1948) pp21ff; for missionary complaints note reactions to Bruce's despatch on the failure of the Protestant missions in China (cit.below p 245) in Evangelical Christendom, Sept.1863, pp418-20, 446,- and English Presbyterian Messenger, 1863, pp316-18; for Bruce's efforts to encour-

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There was also little point in having such a representative if the Peking government itself was incapable of enforcing its authority upon its own subordinate officials in the provinces. Bruce wanted to strengthen the hand of the central government and make it the sole effective military and political power in the Chinese state.(1) His attempt to do this, however, ran quite counter to the realities of the political situation in China by 1860. Very largely as a result of the failure of the regular ("Green Standard") Imperial armies to crush the Taiping rebellion during the eighteen-fifties, effective miliary and political power in Central China, and, through the likin tax, a great measure of financial power also, was passing into the hands of the great provincial officers.(2) Chief among these were Tseng

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(1) cont'd from previous page...
age a more conciliatory attitude among consuls see esp. his circular to them in A&P 1863 (3104) pp82-6, and also ibid. pp 45, 56, 65.

(1) this page.... "The Taepings, I think, are the effect not only the cause of disorder. To destroy them will not save this country from anarchy, and possibly foreign partition, unless the Chinese Government are inclined to provide against the recurrence of brigandage by a more powerful executive, and if this executive is not directed by the Government itself, as distinguished from the local authorities, it is evident that it will become in its turn dangerous to the State". (Bruce to Elgin June 10, 1863, in Elgin Correspondence. (Broomhall)). For failure of his plans see below on the Lay Osborn flotilla and the Ever Victorious Army.

(2) See Franz Michael "Military Organisation and Power Structure of China During the Taiping Rebellion" in Pacific Historical Review vol 18 (1949) pp469-88.

Kuo-fan and his nominees, Li Hung-chang and Tso Tsung t'ang, who became governors of Kiangsu and Chekiang respectively in 1862. These were the men who actually created the armies and devised the strategies which defeated the rebellion. Given their growing power and authority, any attempt to bring about changes in the government of China which did not win their support and co-operation was bound to fail. Indeed it could be said that it might have served Bruce's long term plans better had the campaign against the rebellion organised by the provincial governors failed, like the earlier campaigns of Hsiang Jung and Chang Kuo-liang, for then the central government might have mounted another and more efficient campaign with western help, and have emerged from the rebellion militarily and politically stronger, at least in relation to its own provincial officers. But the protraction of the rebellion could equally well have led to the actual partitioning of China by the Western powers, and it is difficult to see that there was ever much prospect of success for Bruce's plans, especially since they ignored the deep seated social origins of revolt in nineteenth century China.(1)

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(1) Not that Bruce was altogether blind to the economic causes of discontent in China (population pressure, unemployment due to changes in the course of trade &c.), but he saw the problem of settlement essentially as one of law and order. See A&P 1863 (3104) pp8, 138, and esp.142; also F.O.17/351 Bruce to Russell May 9,1861.

However unsuccessful in the long run, this general plan of reforming the government in Peking nevertheless conditioned Bruce's approach to the question of aid against the rebels, and made him the chief spokesman in British counsels for limited rather than extensive intervention. The problem, he told Russell in February, 1862, was to render assistance "in a shape which will strengthen and not weaken the authority of the government".(1) To this end, indirect aid which helped organise the resources available to the Manchus was the approach he recommended. Major points in Bruce's programme were foreign assistance in the organisation of the Imperial customs, and the training of Imperial forces by European officers. But the direct use of Western forces against the rebels he opposed, at least beyond the defence of the treaty ports.

"Whatever the risk to our trade", he wrote to Brig. Gen. Staveley in April 1862, "it had better be incurred than that we should undertake to fight the battles of

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(1) F.O.17/370, Bruce to Russell, Feb. 23, 1862. In this despatch Bruce also said he was "of the opinion that direct assistance ought not to be afforded to this government (except in as far as it flows from the protection that we give to our own interests) because it takes away the only motive, namely that of self-preservation, which will be strong enough to enable those who see these evils (i.e. of inefficiency and inactivity) to break through the shackles imposed by custom, and to undertake seriously the task of improvement by availing themselves in a teachable spirit of the experience of the arts of the Western nations".

> "this Government for it, or afford it more than casual and temporary assistance, which is all that will be required to enable the Imperialists to triumph, if they can be induced to turn their own resources to proper account....."(1)

The aid actually rendered to the Imperialist cause by England over the next two years cannot, perhaps, be accurately described as "casual and temporary", but the phrase reflects Bruce's own approach to the question.

Such an approach is not altogether what one would expect from Bruce's earlier reports on the rebellion and his scepticism during 1861 as to the possibility of making effective arrangements with the rebels. It must be said that Bruce was certainly not remarkable for the steadiness and consistency of his views on the question of aid, for despite his general objection to British forces fighting the battles of the Manchu government he showed a recurrent urge to deal the rebels a "deadly blow" at Nanking, while at other times becoming so exasperated with the Manchu government as to threaten to withdraw aid altogether, and even, on certain conditions,

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(1) A & P 1862 (3058), p.25.

to hand over Shanghai to the rebels.(1) Yet basically he held to a policy of limited and indirect aid to the Manchus, to be given through the central government rather than through the provincial authorities.

The Foreign Office approved Bruce's moderate and conciliatory approach to the Manchu government.(2) It agreed also that direct British intervention against the rebellion should be limited in extent, though it was readier than Bruce to approve the tendency of service officers to go beyond the limits set. But Russell agreed that England should not undertake to use its forces to put down the rebellion, for

> 'we should soon be engaged in an extensive war, while the Chinese government would only leave the burthen and expense of it to us.
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> The rational course for us to pursue," Russell added, "is to defend our own trade, to protect the Treaty ports, and to encourage the Chinese government to arm a sufficient force of Artillery, Infantry and Cavalry, to over-

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(1) For Bruce's inclination towards strong action against the rebels see ibid, p.18; for threats to withdraw aid A& P 1864 (3345 & 3406); for threats to hand over Shanghai, if the populace made an agreement with the rebels and the government took no active measure to protect it, F.O.17/370, Bruce to Russell, Feb.23, 1862. Note H.N.Lay's criticism of Bruce's changes in attitude towards the Peking Government in Our Interests in China (1864) pp.36, 39-42, 62-5 &c,

See foot of next page for (2)

"come the rebels and reduce them to subjection".[1] The British government "do not propose to give to the Chinese government the whole force of the British Empire for their support", Russell added in the House of Lords in July, 1862, after quoting this despatch.[2] The motives which made the home government insist on the limits of the committment it was prepared to make on this issue were somewhat different from those uppermost in Bruce's mind. Considerations of economy are apparent in Russell's despatch, and to these may be added considerations of domestic politics. The Palmerston government had won an election in 1857 precipitated by the outbreak of the "Arrow" war in China, and the opposition had remained very critical of its conduct of that war, including the second campaign of 1859-60, which at the time was often referred to as "the Third China War". For the government to have become embroiled in another large scale war in Chiha, for whatever reason, was likely to prove too much even for Lord Palmerston to carry off successfully with the electors. The possibility of becoming deeply embroiled in China was a main point in the arguments of the

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(2) from previous page.... "Her Majesty's government entir ely approve of the spirit of forbearance and conciliation in which your intercourse with the Chinese Government is con - ducted". F.O.17/349 Russell to Bruce Dec.9, 1861.

(1) this page.. A & P 1862 (3058) p26, Russell to Bruce, July 7, 1862.

(2) P.D. vol 168 (1862), col.897.

numerous critics in England of the policy of intervention, and the government was at some pains to insist that it was only going so far and no further.(1)

Moreover, the British government was not urged to commit its forces deeply by the Manchu government, which maintained a decidedly ambivalent attitude on the question of foreign aid against the rebellion. The need for it, within limits the desirability of it, was recognised, but it was accepted with many misgivings as the lesser of two considerable evils. After the rejection of the Russian offer at the beginning of 1861 there was no further discussion of the question among high Manchu officials until the beginning of 1862, although plans for acquiring foreign arms and vessels were developed. The initiative in re-opening the question of direct foreign aid came from the local gentry and officials at Shanghai. The former were particularly active, one of them, P'an Tseng-wei, writing to Tseng Kuo-fan and travelling himself to Peking in order to urge the need for hiring foreign troops, not only to protect Shanghai but to help recapture inland cities such as Soochow. Leading Manchu officials were, however, very chary of these proposals for the extensive use of foreign troops in the interior. Tseng Kuo-fan argued

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(1) On the strength of public opinion against further involvement in China see below, ch.10.

that, whereas at ports such as Shanghai and Ningpo Western and Chinese interests were bound up together and should be defended in common, this was not so in the interior. If foreign troops were hired to help recapture cities such as Soochow, Changchow or Nanking, "failure would lead to ridicule and success to unpredictable difficulties later".(1) Prince Kung raised practical objections to the use of foreign troops in the interior. They moved much more quickly than did the Chinese, yet would be dependent on them for supplies; they were impatient, and always anxious to advance, but China would have to supply the garrisons for the places they recaptured. Altogether, the value of using foreign troops beyond the treaty ports was questionable.(2)

In addition, although this was no doubt partly a face saving formula, such aid as was accepted was to be on a temporary basis, in a period of acute crisis.

> "The English ambassador says it is possible to send troops to help suppress the rebels, but only temporarily, not permanently", an Edict of February

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(1) IWSM. TC. 4, 28a-29a - Tseng there states he has received letters from P'an Tseng-wei and others.

(2) ibid. TC. 6, 13a-14a, where Kung refers to P'an visiting the Capital. For other complaints of tactical difficulties in co-operating with foreign troops see Li Hung-chang's memorial in TC.7, 48a.

25th 1862 read, "He should be informed that after the alarm was sounded at Shanghai, troops were despatched from every quarter. But since this relief has not yet arrived it is necessary to borrow the help of foreign countries; but once our strength has been concentrated there, and put under competent command, naturally there will be no need of help".(1)

The hiring of foreign officers to train and lead Chinese troops had many troubles inherent in it, Prince Kung wrote in April, 1863, in a memorial on the difficulties which developed over the leadership of the Ever Victorious Army after Ward's death, "but since the rebels are everywhere and not put down we just have to use this expedient temporarily."(2)

Further, there was no anxiety to see large numbers of foreign troops brought to China to help suppress the rebels. In the middle of 1862, after the failure of the first combined attempt to clear a thirty mile radius around Shanghai, there were reports that the English proposed to get more troops from India to assist in a later campaign. Tso Tsung-t'ang, who was leading the Chinese forces in Kiangsu and Chekiang, and Tseng Kuo-fan both expressed their opposition to this, Tso being sceptical of their value on the ground that recent

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(1) ibid TC. 4, 26b-27a.

(2) ibid. TC. 14, 18b-19a.

reverses near Shanghai showed that the barbarians were as much afraid of the rebels as China's own forces.(1) Tseng Kuo-fan, whose troops were just beginning their siege of Nanking, argued that China's own resources were adequate to the task in hand.

"There can be no question", he wrote in July, 1862, "that in the Spring and Summer of this year we have subdued, one after the other, more than twenty cities, and pacified more than a thousand miles along the Yangtze. The rebels cannot hold out much longer. The means for subduing Kiangsu and Chekiang exist, and if our policies do not succeed and the rebel conflagration die out, China should bear the burden herself. Through the Emperor lies the path to self reliance, not through seeking the help of foreign countries in our difficulties and distresses, while our officials have their duties to fulfill. How can we lightly hire foreign forces and so become an object of scorn to lat er generations?"

China, in suppressing the rebels, should not plant the seeds of future complications, Tseng concluded.(2)

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(1) ibid TC.8, 42a, quoted by Tseng Kuo-fan. On Tso Tsung-t'ang's attitude to foreign troops see also W.L.Bales, Tso Tsung-t'ang (1937) pp 150-1.

(2) IWSM. TC 8 42b-43a, 43b; cf Hail, op.cit. pp256-8

When criticised for being too accommodating towards the foreign powers in the interpretation of the treaties, a situation in which Bruce could sympathize with him, Prince Kung vehemently defended the policies of the Tsungli Yamen, and indicated another aspect of the official Manchu attitude towards foreign aid.

> "As for the opinion that foreign help in putting down the rebels is not trustworthy, I am very far from saying that it is. It is just that there is a danger (fear) that if we do not make them our allies, they may be used by the rebels. The harm in that would be immeasurable (beyond words)."(1)

Aid accepted in this spirit was, needless to say, readily abandoned when the need for it was felt to have passed. Foreign officered forces, such as the Ever Victorious Army, were a constant source of apprehension to the Manchu government, for it was difficult to keep control over them or to be sure of their later loyalties. There were no regrets when the Ever Victorious Army was disbanded in May, 1864, before the final capture of Nanking, although that event was obviously at hand by then, for it had long been regarded as

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(1) ibid. TC.5, 55a.

"a tail that was too big to wag".[1]

Altogether, the official Manchu view on the extent to which foreign aid against the rebels should go parallelled, on the obverse side of the coin, the official British view. Limited assistance, at the ports rather than in the interior, indirectly by provision of arms and equipment rather than directly with foreign troops - all these points were common both to Bruce and the high Manchu officials in their approaches to the question. This is not to say, of course, that the aid actually given was exactly on this pattern. The local pressure at Shanghai in favour of more extended intervention was strong on both sides, while the Foreign Office was less insistent on the precise limits to be observed than was Bruce. But although there were differences in detail, there was agreement on fundamentals. In the circumstances foreign intervention was necessary, but it should be limited and it was better given indirectly.

Limited intervention was, in any case, all that was possible with the military forces England had available in China by 1862. Although her naval forces in the station

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(1) For doubts on the reliability of foreign trained troops see ibid. TC. 10, 2a, 13a,-15a; for complaints on the E.V.A. see memorial of Li Hung-chang (seen Feb.11, 1863) in TC.12, 53a-54b. The Edict following instructs that it be limited to 3,000 men and brought under more effective Chinese control.

were increased by about a third on what they had been in March, 1861, her military establishment in China remained within a few hundreds, one way or the other, of the five thousand mark, and it was not increased in the last years of the rebellion.(1) There was, however, a very considerable increase in the force stationed at Shanghai. In January, 1862, this was between six and seven hundred men, to whom should be added four or five hundred French, two hundred and fifty volunteers and perhaps the same number of marines, a total European force of about fifteen hundred.(2) During March and April the number of British and Indian troops at Shanghai was considerably increased, from the garrison then being withdrawn from Tientsin, and by the middle of the year the regular British force there was about two thousand five hundred. With other additions the total force available was probably in the region of four thousand.(3) In the circumstances this was certainly a formidable force, especially when the great superiority of its arms and training

(1) See Appendix C. On Aug.5, 1862, Rear-Adm.Hope wrote to Elgin saying there was no need to send extra troops from India, although earlier these had been asked for. On Sept.9,1863, Elgin was asked by the War Office to send some reinforcements to China, not for use against the rebels but to release other forces for service in Japan. See Elgin Corres. (India Office), Letters from Miscellaneous, Vol.1861-3, pp 397-400, and 861-8.

(2) "Our foreign force here is by no means large. It consists of 700 English and Sikhs, 4 or 500 Frenchm 250 volunteers and a number of bluejackets" (Rev.W.Muirhead from Shanghai, Jan.23,1862, in London Miss. Scty Cent.China Letters,BoxIII).

(3) The numberx of French troops at Shanghai seems to have remained at about 500. See A&P 1863 (3104), pp16,25,103.

are taken into account. But it was not of a size, nor was it ever intended, to be used beyond the defence of Shanghai and a thirty mile radius around it. In fact one of the arguments used by Rear Admiral Hope in favour of defending a radius around Shanghai and not simply the port itself was that it would take fewer troops, using them in flying columns to support Chinese garrisons, than to man walls four and a half miles in extent. The object was to keep the size of the force needed at Shanghai as small as possible.(1)

The British military commander in China during most of 1862, Brig. Gen. Staveley, was authorised to send for additional troops from India if he felt it absolutely necessary, but he was certainly not encouraged to do so. When he did call for them, upon what the War Office regarded as the inadequate ground that Indian troops stood the Shanghai climate better than British, he was reprimanded and told that it was the opinion of the Government that "the British military forces at Shanghae may safely be reduced".(2) In March, 1863, over twelve months before the capture of Nanking, Bruce also urged upon him the desirability of making arrangements with the Chinese authorities for the defence of the port "which would gradually enable us to reduce the number of troops at Shanghae,

(1) Adm.1/5790, Rear Ad. Hope to Admiralty June 17,1862. Cf.also Hope to Elgin June 18,1862, in Elgin Correspondence (India Office) Letters from Miscellaneous, vol.1861-3, pp845-58.

(2) F.O.17/399 enc. in W.O. to F.O. Feb.16, 1863.

and consequently the expenses of the occupation; for I look with dread at the consequences of the financial difficulties that must result from the present state of expenditure".(1) In the middle of 1863, by which time the threat to Shanghai was safely past, the British force there was reduced to about fifteen hundred. The British forces maintained at Shanghai during 1862-3 were never capable of an extensive campaign against the rebellion.

The occasions on which regular British naval and military forces were engaged in action against the rebels were confined to the year 1862. The manner in which these engagements were first undertaken illustrates the quite unplanned nature of the change in British policy in the first part of that year, for they were begun well in advance of any Foreign Office approval or instruction. At the beginning of 1862, British policy as understood by the Foreign Office did not go beyond the defence of the foreign settlement areas, save at Shanghai, while negotiation with the rebels where necessary was still an accepted part of it.

> "It is true that the accounts we receive on all sides show the Taepings to be little better than Banditti organised on a large scale and bent on free quarters and plunder," a Foreign Office memorandum of February 22nd

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(1) A & P 1864 (3295) p.68.

read, "and we have abundant evidence of the destructive nature of the insurrection and of the blasphemous and immoral character of the superstition on which it is based; but our efforts in the various interviews which our agents have held with the Rebel leaders have been directed chiefly to securing the persons and Property of British subjects, and maintaining our rights to trade as secured for us by Treaty".(1)

A few days after this was written Rear Admiral Hope's report telling of the refusal of the rebels to extend the agreement not to approach the treaty ports was received, and early in March his instructions were extended to provide for the defence of all the ports not already in rebel hands by the naval forces under his command. There was no instruction about the use of military forces, and any need for action beyond the ports was not yet envisaged by the Foreign Office.(2)

Yet such action had already been taken and more was being planned, even before these instructions were sent. Early in February the consul at Shanghai, Medhurst, had urged the

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(1) F.O.17/380 Memo by Hammond Feb.22, 1862.

(2) For these new instructions see A & P 1862 (2976) p111. They were sent to Bruce by telegraph via Russia on March 12 (F.O.228/318). The W.O. was informed of them, but not requested to send comparable ones to the military commanders in China (F.O.17/381 F.O. to W.O.March 11). In May Bruce told Prince Kung that the British Govt was "inclined" to use its naval forces to protect the Treaty Ports, but not its land forces. Bruce added that unless the Manchu Govt improved its own forces at the Ports he would recommend that

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need for action by British forces beyond the walls, on the ground that it was necessary to clear a belt of country around Shanghai in order to maintain supplies for its population, now swollen by refugees. He saw such action as essentially defensive and consistent with a policy of strict neutrality.(1) On February 21st Rear-Admiral Hope used naval forces to co-operate with Chinese troops under Ward in clearing the rebels from the immediate vicinity of Shanghai, and to capture the towns of Woosung and Kaokiao, which commanded the river approaches to the port. He also urged upon Bruce the need for more extensive action, and suggested clearing the country within a line running through towns approximately thirty miles out. Bruce thought this project "within the scope of the intentions of the Government", but insisted that the Imperial authorities must provide adequate garrisons to hold the line, "for I do not think Her Majesty's Government would approve of our being committed to hold any other position than Shanghae itself". Hope was confident both that the Chinese would provide forces capable of holding

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continuing (2) from previous page.. only the settlement areas be defended. (See Bruce to Kung enc. in Bruce to Russell July 8, 1862, in F.O.17/373). This was probably just one of Bruce's periodic threats.

(1) this page..
A & P 1862 (2976) pp 140-1, 151-3.

the towns when recaptured, and that the projected campaign was merely anticipating the wishes of the Government.(1)

At the end of April, 1862, therefore, substantial British, French and Chinese forces began their attacks on the rebels within the line proposed. It proved easier to capture the towns than to hold them, for, as Bruce had feared, the Chinese garrisons to which they were handed over proved quite incapable of holding them against renewed rebel attacks, and by the beginning of June the situation around Shanghai was back much to what it had been before the campaign started. Despite the urgings of Hope, Staveley refused to renew it during the summer months, and was content to hold Shanghai itself and the river approaches, concentrating meanwhile on training Chinese forces for a new campaign in the autumn. Actually, the pressure on Shanghai eased considerably without further action, and by mid-July Staveley was able to report that "the rebels have ceased to give any annoyance in the vicinity of Shanghae". From information received from Europeans in the silk districts, he added, the bulk of their force appeared to have gone towards Nanking, "which city is pressed by a force of Imperialists". This was in truth

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(1) For Hope's first action against the rebels beyond Shanghai itself see A & P 1862 (2992) pp1-6; for his recommendations to Bruce for more extensive action and his confidence that the home government would approve see A & P 1862(3058) pp 10, 38; for Bruce's qualified agreement ibid, pp10-11, 20, 24-5.

the situation, the Chung Wang having been recalled urgently by Hung to assist in the defence of the capital. It proved a much easier task to clear and hold the thirty mile limit when the campaign was renewed in October.(1)

It is clear that the thirty-mile radius policy was very much the creation of the officers stationed at Shanghai. Bruce gave it qualified approval before it was first applied in May, but the idea certainly was not his, and he was later very critical of it.(2) The Foreign Office really did nothing more than acquiesce in the scheme. On May 6th, a week after the campaign had actually started, it agreed that action by British forces up to fifteen or twenty miles from the forts was allowable, and by July 10th it had got as far as laying down that

"our Policy should be directed to two points:

1st To protect the Treaty or open Ports and their vicinity, but not extending beyond thirty miles from the Port.

2nd To aid the Chinese Government by encouragement and advice to form an organized force for military and naval service".(3)

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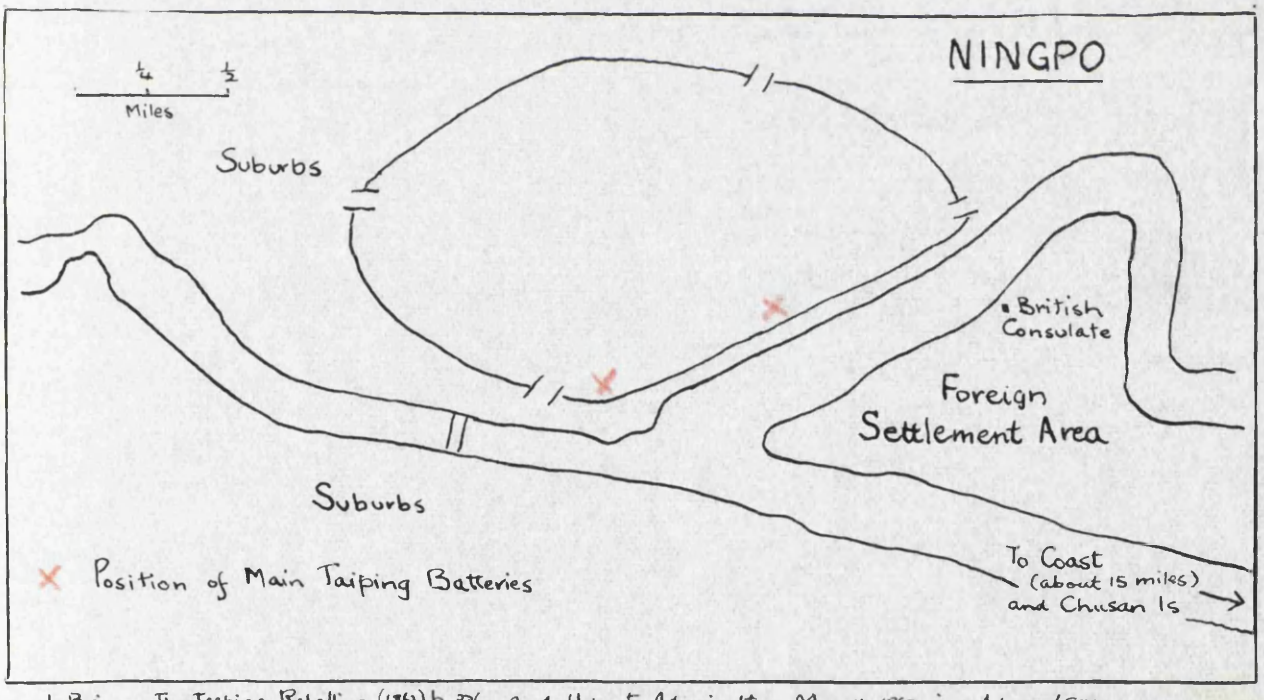
(1) For details of these two campaigns to clear the 30 mile radius see A & P 1862 (3058) pp17, 28-9, 33-5, 41-2 and A & P 1863 (3104) pp 11, 14-15, 24-5, 38-40, 44, 72, 102-4, 110, 120; also D.C.Boulger, The Life of Sir Halliday Macartney (1908) pp 47ff.

(2) F.O.17/375 Bruce to Russell (private letter) Dec.11,1862 - "You are aware that the 30 mile radius around Shanghai

For rest of (2) and (3) see next page...

Morse and Macnair, op. cit., p 239 and Hope to Admiralty, April 19, 1862, in Adm. 1/5790.



L. Brine, The Taeping Rebellion (1862) p. 336, and Hope to Admiralty, May 11, 1862, in Adm. 1/5790.

But neither the Foreign Office nor Bruce ever directed that offensive operations beyond the ports be undertaken, and they were agreed in rejecting a suggestion that the whole of the Silk district around Shanghai be occupied.(1)

At Ningpo also, service action outran Foreign Office instructions. On July 7th Russell instructed Bruce that "Ningpo ought to be recovered by the Imperialists".(2) In fact it had been recovered for the Imperialists as early as May 10th, by the combined action of British and French naval forces. Friction with the rebels in occupation of Ningpo had quickly developed over their refusal to give up a claim to jurisdiction over the foreign settlement area outside the town, which had been hastily defined and proclaimed by the

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(2) from previous page... was not my scheme. Rear Admiral Hope had embarked on it before I was consulted (cf. above) and I consented to it on certain conditions which were not observed". Bruce went on to object that it was a misuse of forces, and served a short term end (the protection of Shanghai) rather than a long term one (the eradication of the rebels). See also A & P 1864 (3295) p 162 for later criticism of it by Bruce.

(3) F.O. 17/382 F.O. to W.O. and Admiralty, May 6, 1862 and F.O. 228/319 Russell to Bruce, July 10, 1862.

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F.O.17/373 Bruce to Russell July 8, 1862 and F.O.228/319 Russell to Bruce, Oct. 17, 1862.

(2) A & P 1862 (3058) p.26.

foreign consuls there soon after the Taiping capture of the port, apparently without any prior reference either to Manchu or rebel authorities. The situation was greatly aggravated when the rebels began strengthening the defences on the city wall opposite the foreign settlement. This was readily interpreted as the prelude to a rebel attack on the foreign settlement, but it could as readily have been interpreted as a purely defensive measure, for the foreign settlement area was unfortunately placed in the direct line of fire between the city and any forces advancing up river to attack it. There were "incidents" over firing from the wall by the rebels endangering foreign ships and residents, and altogether it was a thoroughly explosive situation, especially since the foreign settlement area was crowded with refugees from the city. Early in May the Imperialists, based on Chusan Island, were ready to attempt its recapture, and the English and French naval commanders thereupon issued a remarkable warning to the rebels to the effect that

> "we maintain a perfect neutrality, but if you fire the guns or muskets from the battery or wall opposite the settlement on the advancing Imperialists, thereby endangering the lives of our men and people in the foreign Settlement, we shall feel it our duty to return the fire and bombard the city".

This was certainly a very peculiar kind of "neutrality".

After the inevitable shots from the wall had been fired, the city was bombarded by the two British and one French naval vessels there, between 10 am. and 4 p.m., with a two hour break for lunch, according to Capt. Dew's report of the action. It was then stormed, captured and handed over to the Imperialists on the same evening, their forces having taken virtually no part in the battle. In the following months British naval forces in the area helped to clear a thirty mile radius around Ningpo as at Shanghai, but foreign assistance to the Manchus in this area became mainly a French affair. The actual recapturing of the city was, however, carried out mainly by British naval forces which, strictly speaking, had never received instructions from the Admiralty going beyond those ordering the defence of the treaty ports not in rebel hands. The action at Ningpo hardly came within that scope, but it was nevertheless in harmony with the trend in official British policy towards the rebellion by this time. On June 6th, Bruce expressed his approval of it to Russell, arguing that a collision at Ningpo was bound to come sooner or later, and on July 22nd, a fortnight after writing that Ningpo ought to be recapture d by the Imperialists, the Foreign Secretary was approving its

recapture by Her Majesty's forces.(1)

These two campaigns, at and around Shanghai and Ningpo, were all in which regular British forces were engaged against the rebels. But in addition to this direct intervention, assistance was given to the Manchu cause in a number of other important ways. The training of Chinese troops by British officers was begun at Tientsin early in 1862, and extended to Shanghai after the failure of the first thirty mile radius campaign. The co-operation of the Imperial authorities in this project was not altogether whole-hearted, from their fear that the troops trained in this way would become difficult for Chinese officers to handle, and Staveley complained at the numbers and quality of the troops provided for training at Shanghai. Bruce was fearful lest British action of this sort provoke the jealousy of other powers, and would have preferred to see officers of a smaller treaty power (he suggested Prussia) carry it out, but it was actually done by English and French officers during 1862 and 1863.(2)

(1) For details of the situation at Ningpo see A&P 1862 (3058), pp 29-31, 36-40, 44-52 and F.O.228/326. For Bruce's and Russell's approval see ibid p 40 and A&P 1863 (3104) p 35. Adm.1/5790 Hope to Admiralty May 11, 1862, has a map of the action. For accounts of it see L.Brine The Taeping Rebellion in China (1862) pp 312-36 and A.E.Wilson The Ever Victorious Army (1868) ch.7.

(2) On training of Chinese troops see F.O.17/370 Bruce to Russell Feb.23,1862 and A&P 1863 (3104) pp.16,24,42-3. On Nov.10, 1862, Bruce reported to Russell that he had recommended Prince Kung, "to avoid jealousies by engaging Prussian officers as instructors,....Prussia, as representing the Zollverein and the states of Northern Germany has a large trade, and has no navy, and her officers are less likely to mix in political questions in China than those of any other Treaty Power". See also A&P 1864 (3295), p.68.

Again, in March, 1862, a large body of troops from Tseng Kuo-fan's forces were transported down the Yangtze from Anking to Shanghai, in order to assist in the defence of the treaty port and its perimeter, in British trading vessels chartered for the purpose by the Chinese authorities. This appears to have been the main occasion upon which aid was given in this way. Hope approved the firms owning the vessels undertaking the commission, "provided the permission is looked upon as entirely exceptional", and Medhurst asked for Bruce's approval of what would, he noted, amount to "a violation of the Neutrality Ordinance". Later attempts by British shipowners to charter vessels to the Manchu authorities at Ningpo for the same purpose appear to have been discouraged. (1)

Aid was also given by supplying Manchu forces with arms. Early in 1862 Ward's force had been provided with arms and supplies at cost price, while Bruce applied for musket and field guns from India. The arms supplied seem to have been chiefly of the kind going out of use in the British army at this time - smooth bore muskets and old-fashioned field guns,

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(1) On transport of Chinese forces in British vessels see A & P 1862 (2992) pp 9-10. and F.O.228/329 Medhurst to Bruce Dec.19,1862. There is evidence suggesting that Bruce disapproved of the transport of the Chinese troops down the Yangtze - see F.O.17/372 Bruce to Russell June 10, 1862 enc.letter from Wyndham, May 20,1862. Private vessels were contracted for the Ever Victorious Army, however - see A & P 1864 (3295) pp.139-40.

not the Enfield rifle or the Armstrong shell firing gun.[1] As to their extent, it is difficult to get any clear idea, but it was fairly substantial. Staveley reported in November, 1862, that the Ever Victorious Army had recently received "10,000 stand of arms, 12 twelve-pounder guns and 1,000,000 round of ammunition", and at the same time reported his intention to sell to the Manchu authorities at Shanghai, "at a valuation", the arms and accoutrements of two regiments leaving for India.[2]

Quite as important as the provision of arms for the Manchus were the measures taken to prevent their reaching the rebels. In July, 1862, Staveley called attention to the large smuggling trade in arms being carried on by Western traders, and reported that deserters from rebel forces claimed that ten per cent had muskets or rifles, though these were later said to be of "inferior description".[3] In July Bruce requested that action be taken at Hong Kong and Singapore to stop supplies of arms being acquired by traders at those ports, and this was accordingly done by the Colonial and

(1) When the India Office asked the F.O. about Bruce's request for muskets and field guns Russell said it should be granted, provided the field guns were not Armstrongs (F.O.17/376 Nov.21-2, 1862).
(2) F.O.17/375 enc. in Bruce to Russell Nov.25, 1862.
(3) A & P 1863 (3104) pp 25,42,102-3. Forrest reported in 1861 that "the foreign arms of which (the rebels) have a large quantity, are far more dangerous to themselves than their enemies". (A & P 1861 (2840) p.28).

India Office at the request of the Foreign Office.(1) Further, on January 1st, 1863, new regulations for trade on the Yangtze came into force which specifically forbade foreign trade at any point on the river apart from Chinkiang, Kiukiang and Hankow, under pain of confiscation of both ship and cargo. There was no question of stopping foreign trade altogether, but a stronger determination to see that the rebels did not benefit from it was apparent.(2)

Very important for this purpose was the scheme to provide the Manchu government with a modern flotilla of ships, capable of enforcing these trade regulations on armed Western trading vessels. This had been suggested to the Manchu government in 1861 by Robert Hart, acting head of the Imperial Customs while H. N. Lay was absent on long leave in England, and in 1862 Lay was instructed to buy suitable vessels and recruit officers and men. Bruce gave the scheme his encouragement, while the home government facilitated the buying of the vessels and removed the legal obstacles in the way by an Order in Council of August 30th, 1862. This authorised Lay and the chosen commander of the flotilla, Capt. Sherard

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(1) A & P 1863 (3104) pp 58-9, 74-5. For further correspondence on this question between the F.O. and C.O. see F.O.17/386, 402-3 and 417.

(2) See A & P 1863 (3104) pp 153-4 and A & P 1864 (3295) p 141.

Osborn, to enlist British subjects for military and naval service under the Chinese Emperor. The chief purposes of the fleet referred to in these early negotiations were the suppression of piracy in China waters and the policing of trade. For the British government these were certainly major reasons for its support of the scheme, for it was anxious to reduce the naval forces it was obliged to maintain in China waters to protect British trade. But there is no doubt that the flotilla was also intended for action against the rebels, and that it would have been, in effect, a substitute for the direct use of British naval forces against the rebels on the Yangtze.(1)

In fact the Lay - Osborn flotilla was never used in any capacity at all in China waters, being dispersed soon after its arrival on account of disagreements over the terms under which Osborn would serve. The point at issue was whether he should be required to act on orders from provincial

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(1) On the Lay-Osborn flotilla see A & P 1862 (3057) and A & P 1864 (3271); also S.F.Wright Hart and the Chinese Customs (1950) ch.p and J.L.Rawlinson in Papers on China No.4. (mimeograph by Far East Department Harvard University,1950). Mr. J.Gerson is preparing a thesis for the University of London on Lay's career in China, which will deal more fully than has been done to date with the flotilla. On its projected use against the rebels note Osborn at a Royal Geographical Scty meeting - "he and his brother officers would never forget that they were both Christians and Englishmen. They were not going out simply to slaughter a wretched Taiping; they had nobler motives in view, and he felt it would be the greatest feat of his life if he could take a Taiping town, and be able to say that not a

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governors and commanders, as well as from the central government. According to a prior agreement drawn up between Lay and Osborn, the Chinese government was to issue orders to the flotilla only through Lay who would, as it were, censor them. Not surprisingly, both the Peking government and the provincial authorities refused to approve such conditions of service, while Lay and Osborn also refused to give way. Lay's argument was that "a European force in the hands of local authorities would be infallibly misapplied, and, its immediate object accomplished, would be cast aside, without any permanent good either to China or Europe".(1) Bruce played a rather wavering role in the crisis, which was strictly speaking one between the Manchu government and officers in its employ, seeing the point of view of the government but also approving Osborn's refusal to accept orders from provincial Chinese authorities. Lay was blamed for the contretemps, but the main point to note here is that it provided a clear illustration of the difficulties in the way of attempting to by-pass the authority of the great

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single sould had been slaughtered in it". (London and China Express Dec.29, 1862, pp.76-8).

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H. N. Lay Our Interests in China (1864), p.25.

provincial officers in any plans, either for the suppression of the rebellion or for strengthening the government of Chiha.(1)

The employment of British military officers, notably Gordon, to serve in the Ever Victorious Army is much the best known aspect of British action against the Taiping rebellion. As with the thirty mile radius scheme, the initiative in this matter came from some of the British authorities, civil and military, serving at Shanghai, not from Bruce or the Foreign Office. Bruce, in fact, never approved this kind of aid at all, but his objections were over-ruled by the support given to the idea by the Foreign Office itself.

The original commander of the force, Ward, was killed in fighting near Ningpo in September, 1862. Consul Medhurst and Staveley were quick to advance proposals for replacing him by a British officer, who might improve the quality and discipline of what was a far from model army. Bruce

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(1) "The Chinese Government has latterly shows its inability or indisposition to carry out the various suggestions I have made for strengthening the Central power, of which the flotilla is only one, and it was evident that there was no disposition on the part of the Chinese to incorporate it into their system so as to subscribe the general purposes of police and revenue, but that if forced to accept it they would have directed it against Nankin and would have left it to be disorganized by the ill will and intrigues of the provincial authorities..." F.O.17/395 Bruce to Russell Nov.19, 1863.

disapproved of these proposals, thinking it preferable that "the successor should be taken from among the officers of the corps", while Rear Admiral Hope, returned to Shanghai from a visit to Japan by the beginning of October, "put a stop to" these early moves to place the Ever Victorious Army under a British officer. Hope and Bruce both backed the claims of Ward's second in command, another American adventurer named Burgevine, who was for the time appointed.(1) But by the end of the year the Foreign Office, had learned, through the War Office, of Medhurst's and Staveley's proposals of September, and gave its approval to these. On January 9th, 1863, a second Order in Council was issued authorising British military officers to take service in the armed forces of the Emperor of China, without making this dependent on recruitment by Lay or Osborn.(2)

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(1) See F.O.17/374 Bruce to Russell Oct.13-14, 1862 and F.O.228/329 Medhurst to Bruce Sept. 25, Oct 2 6 and 9,1862.

(2) For F.O.approval of the Medhurst-Staveley proposal see F.O.228/319 Russell to Bruce Dec. 29, 1862. It is not clear whether the Order in Council of Jan. 9,1863, was directly inspired by this proposal, but I have found no evidence suggesting it before this time. For both the Orders in Council see A & P 1863 (341). The main legal obstacle they were intended to surmount was the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1819 (59 Geo.III c.69), though Bowring's Neutrality Ordinance of 1855 was an additional complication. The lack of any planning behind the decision to release British officers for service in Chinese forces is indicated by the fact that by Jan.5, 1863, the F.O. was agreeing with Hope that Burgevine should command the E.V.A. (F.O.228/337 Hammond to Bruce Jan.9, 1863). To complete the confusion, Bruce's despatches criticising the proposal had been delayed by shipwreck (ibid Jan.10).

Before the new Order in Council was received in China difficulties had already arisen between Burgevine and the Chinese authorities at Shanghai over the payment of his troops and their proposed transfer to assist in the siege of Nanking. Burgevine was dismissed by Li Hung-chang, who then applied to Staveley for an officer to replace him, and on January 22nd, 1863, an agreement was drawn up for the joint command of the force by Chinese and British officers, the latter, however, still not to serve beyond the thirty mile limit.(1) At the end of February news of the Order in Council had been received and the Ever Victorious Army had meanwhile suffered a severe repulse at Taitsan, just outside the thirty mile limit, partly because of uncertainties over its leadership. Staveley then reported his intention of putting Gordon in command, and asked how far restrictions on his movements would apply. The Foreign Office replied that British officers under special licence (they were placed on half-pay, but retained their regimental rank) might serve anywhere in China.(2) But this was as far as it was prepared to go. When Staveley proposed that it might be well to take over the force altogether and make a

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(1) A & P 1864 (3295) pp.21-2.

(2) ibid pp.59-62.

British contingent of it, officered and paid for by the British government from funds derived from the Shanghai customs, the Foreign Office refused to entertain the idea.(1)

Bruce disapproved of the whole principle of using any British officers to lead Chinese forces in the field. "I cannot be a party, in any way, to the employment of these officers beyond the radius, either at Ningpo or Shanghae",(2) he told Major General Brown, Staveley's successor, in June, at which time he was engaged in upbraiding the Peking Government for its failure to exact strict observance of treaty terms from its provincial officers. Indeed, the core of his objection to the system was that, apart from being likely to arouse the jealousy and suspicion of other treaty powers, it encouraged and strengthened provincial rather than central government independence and authority. The Ever Victorious Army was a force employed by and responsible to the local

(1) F.O.228/338 Russell to Bruce May 22, 1863. Staveley later proposed raising a force of 10,000 Chinese, trained and officered by Europeans, which Bruce considered "neither practicable nor expedient". (F.O.17/394 Bruce to Russell Oct.29, 1863 and F.O.228/338-9 Layard and Russell to Bruce, June 26, July 20 and 31, 1863).

(2) F.O.17/392 enc. in Bruce to Russell June 25,1862. Bruce told Russell "If the capture of one or two strongholds were likely to prove a deathblow to the insurrection, and if on the other hand the government showed a desire to be guided by our advice in "its general policy, it might be advisable to allow this system of co-operation, however imperfect, to continue. But the government shows a disposition rather to connive at infraction of treaty rights than to incur unpopularity with local authorities in enforcing them".

Chinese authorities at Shanghai. It was officered by Europeans, mostly Americans, while its rank and file, who numbered between three and five thousand about this time, were Chinese volunteers, known as "false foreign devils" by the rebels on account of the half European uniform they wore.(1) Although a troublesome and potentially dangerous force, quite capable of deserting en masse to the rebels, Bruce was anxious to see it held together on account of its military value. But he did not wish to see provincial control over it underwritten by British officers, especially through agreements with the local Chinese authorities which ignored the central government at Peking. He particularly resented the support given to Li Hung-chang early in 1863 by the British military authorities at Shanghai when Li refused to reinstate Burgevine, despite Bruce's own advocacy of that adventurer's claims to the Peking government.

> "The encouragement given to the Governor (Li Hung-chang) in thwarting an arrangement suggested by the foreign ministers and recommended by the Central Government tends to weaken the central executive which it is our true policy to strengthen", he told Russell in September, "and thereby to render more difficult the restoration

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(1) On the E.V.A. see esp. A & P 1864 (3295) pp 26-9 and A.E. Wilson, opx.cit., pp.126-35.

"of Tranquillity, and less effectual our means of enforcing the observance of Treaties by remonstrance at Peking, instead of by violent action at the ports".(1) The system, he complained a few weeks later, had "invigorated the pernicious system of provincial independent Government"(2) Like the collapse of the Lay-Osborn scheme, the employment of British officers to lead a provincial Chinese force was really a defeat for Bruce's main policy in China.

Russell did not share Bruce's objections to British officers leading provincial Chinese forces, and saw no reason why they, rather than foreigners or adventurers, should not do so.(3) It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Foreign Office, and still more the service officers in China, with the possible exception of Hope, who left at the end of 1862 in any case, never fully appreciated the long term objectives behind Bruce's insistence on giving only strictly limited aid to the Manchus. For them the suppression of the rebellion tended to be an end in itself, and they were always ready to stretch the limits.

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(1) A & P 1864 (3295) p.156; also ibid p.96.

(2) F.O.17/394 Bruce to Russell Oct. 29, 1863

(3) A & P 1864 (3295) p.69 and F.O.228/339 Russell to Bruce, Sept. 7, 1863.

Gordon assumed command of the Ever Victorious Army in March, 1863, and thereafter the main British contribution to the defeat of the rebellion was made through the very considerable support given him and the other English officers who joined the force.(1) The campaigns and difficulties of Strachey's "faintly smiling Englishman" have been described many times elsewhere. The main point to be emphasised here is that his victories, the chief of which was the capture of Soochow at the end of 1863, were the more readily gained because of the support provided by the regular British forces around Shanghai. The thirty mile radius area provided him with a safe base and source of supply, while in September, 1863, some British forces were temporarily moved up beyond the thirty mile limit to provide him with advanced support when it was feared that Burgevine, who in true adventurer fashion had deserted to the rebels, would succeed in fomenting a mutiny within the ranks of his force. This affair led Bruce to complain to Elgin that "admirals and generals have gone Taeping mad", but the Foreign Office proved once again willing

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(1) I have found no clear indication how many other British officers joined the E.V.A., but it would not appear to have been many. See Palmerston cit. below p 221-2, and C. Beatty, His Country was the World (1954) pp50-1.

to condone service initiative.[1] Gordon went on to capture Soochow and, in May 1864, Changchow, after which the Ever Victorious Army was disbanded, to the relief of nearly all parties. By that time the Orders in Council authorising British service in the Emperor's forces had been withdrawn.

The repeal, on March 1st, 1864, of the two Orders in Council was prompted by reports of the execution, on the orders of Li Hung-chang, of the Taiping Wangs who had surrendered Soochow to Gordon after he had promised them safe conducts. Gordon himself was so outraged by this affair that for a time he threw up his command, but eventually resumed it again, asking "However ungrateful or hopeless it may be to try and redeem the Mandarins, do we better matters by having the Rebels back again? The one has some Government, the others have none".[2] But a considerable outcry had been raised among foreign observers, a meeting

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(1) See A & P 1864 (3295) pp 153-4, 157 and F.O.228/339 Russell to Bruce Nov. 10, 1863 - "Under present circumstances British officers on full pay should be allowed to join the force under Major Gordon's command and to serve beyond the 30 mile radius". Bruce wrote to Elgin "I am labouring against my instructions to preserve the country being drifted into fresh Chinese complications. But admirals and generals have gone Taeping mad. I try to prevent British officers serving beyond the radius around the ports, and I am overborne by orders from home". Bruce to Elgin Nov.8, 1863 in Elgin Correspondence (Broomhall). On the importance of Chinese and foreign assistance to Gordon note Shen Lien-chih Rôle du General C.G.Gordon dans la repression de l'Insurrection des Thai Phing (1933), esp. p.104 and Conclusion.

(2) F.O.17/407 enc. in Bruce to Russell Feb.12, 1864; also A & P 1864 (3408).

of consuls at Shanghai condemning Li's action as one of "extreme treachery, abhorrent to human nature".(1) The British government had already faced a great deal of criticism at home for its policy of intervention, and had several times shown itself anxious to avoid the charge of implicitly condoning atrocities. In May, 1862, when first approving a policy of direct aid, Russell had insisted that it be impressed upon Prince Kung "that if he sanctions cruel and indiscriminate punishments he will entirely lose the support of the British authorities", and there was more than one enquiry into charges of this kind before the Soochow incident.(2) This provided the occasion for the repeal of the Orders in Council, the first of which had in any case become pointless after the collapse of the Lay-Osborn scheme. In doing this the British government does not appear to have been anticipating the imminent defeat of the rebellion, though its eventual defeat was becoming clear. The reasons given in the House of Commons by Palmerston were simply the "disgraceful" conduct of the Manchu officials and the fact that only Gordon and "one or two other persons"

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(1) A. & P 1864 (3295) pp.192-3

(2) F.O.228/318 Russell to Bruce May 6, 1862. For other enquiries about atrocities see A & P 1863 (3104) pp 70-1, 78, 112-19 and A & P 1864 (3295) pp 108-10, 116-22, 126.

had taken advantage of the Orders.[1] They were accordingly repealed, but without first advising or consulting Bruce, who was quick to point out "the grave complications that may arise, if orders that amount to a change of policy are based upon the conduct of a provincial governor, without awaiting the result of a reference to the Government at Peking through Her Majesty's Representative".[2] The "change of policy" was not complete, since the British Government was presumably still ready to use its forces to defend a thirty mile area around the treaty ports. But the withdrawal of the Orders in Council represented a sort of half step backwards towards the old policy of limited neutrality. Intervention had not been a popular policy in England itself, and the government appears to have been glad to begin to contract out of it before the rebellion was finally destroyed.

By the time of the repeal of the Orders in Council the rebellion was in fact facing destruction. The armies of Tseng Kuo-fan, actually under the command of his brother Tseng Kuo-ch'üan, had begun their siege of Nanking in May,

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(1) P.D. vol 174 (1864) col. 1473; also A & P 1864 (3295) pp 198-9

(2) F.O. 17/408 Bruce to Russell June 8, 1864.

1862, and were slowly tightening their grip upon that city. Other armies, of which the Ever Victorious was one, were pushing the rebels back from the coastal provinces they had over-run in 1860 and 1861. The rebellion was slowly contained within a shrinking area of territory between Nanking, Soochow and Hangchow.(1) The wisest policy to have followed in such a situation, and that recommended by the Chung Wang, would have been to stage a "Long March" to some other area and there to establish a new base,(2) but Hung Hsiu-ch'üan refused to abandon his proclaimed capital. With the fall of Soochow in December, 1863, and of Hangchow in March, 1864, the main rebel force was bottled up in Nanking and destroyed there in July. A few remnants fled southward and maintained the struggle a little longer, but to all intents the Taiping rebellion as a serious threat to Manchu rule ended in the middle of 1864.

The main British contribution to this had been the denial to the rebels of any chance to capture Shanghai and its rich revenues, or to establish themselves firmly in the coastal provinces after their expulsion from the central

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(1) See maps in W.L.Bales, op.cit.

(2) Hail, op. cit., p244, says Tseng Kuo-fan's "annaconda" strategy was designed to prevent this.

Yangtze valley. It is impossible to deny the great importance of this aid to the Manchus, who would at least have had a longer struggle to defeat the rebellion but for it. Yet it should also be said that there were limits set to the extent of this aid by the British government, even though it was indulgent towards the tendency of some of its agents to go beyond those limits; that it was aid given and withdrawn in an unplanned, unco-ordinated, at times almost haphazard fashion; and that it was aid intended in part to serve as a stepping stone towards stronger government in China. Insofar as it can be said to have had ends beyond merely helping to crush the Taiping rebellion, the British policy of intervention was a failure. It helped in fact to preserve a corrupt, reactionary and incapable government, not to create a more efficient one. But it is a great over simplification to suggest that it was a policy designed to preserve the Manchu government <u>because</u> it was weak and corrupt. Results are no sure guide to motives.(1)

(1) This seems to be the assumption behind such judgments as that of C.P.Fitzgerald (<u>China</u>, 1950 edn, pp 574,582-3) that the alliance with the Manchus was one of the "most discreditable in the history of Sino-European relations", and that the unreformed Manchus were assisted as part of "the cynical policy of western imperialism in 1860". There was certainly nothing very high minded about the British policy of intervention on behalf of the Manchus, but a positive and conscious desire to keep China as weak and backward as possible does not seem to me to have been part of it.

CHAPTER VII

REASONS FOR BRITISH INTERVENTION

The basic reason for British intervention against the Taiping rebellion is agreed upon by all historians of the subject, whatever view they take of the rights or wrongs of that intervention. England intervened from motives of pure self-interest, in defence of the treaty rights she had exacted from the Manchu government in the wars of 1840-2 and 1856-60. The real question is why those rights, and especially the trade which had developed under them, were felt to be seriously threatened by the rebellion by 1862.

Some of the reasons which have been advanced in answer to this question seem to me to attempt to force nineteenth century issues and events too rigidly into twentieth century categories of thought, while others, although the kind of reasons which could well have operated in the minds of those responsible for the British policy at that time, are difficult to establish convincingly from the evidence of official reports and papers.(1) So long as one is convinced that British intervention was a long intended policy, then it is necessary

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(1) For examples of the arguments examined in this chapter see Introduction above.

to find deep laid, long nourished reasons for it. But it would seem that the farther one stands back from the detailed historical record, the easier it is to see these.

The argument that the British government acted against the rebellion because it feared it as a popular national movement which would establish a strong government upon which British demands would be less successfully pressed than upon the weak and unpopular Manchu government, is open to objection on several counts. Whether in fact the Taipings would have been able to establish such a government had they succeeded in overthrowing the Manchus, British officials in China certainly did not believe that they were at all likely to do so. Not nationalism but anarchy was what they most feared.

> "The overthrow of the Government by the insurgents as at present constituted", Bruce wrote in May, 1862, "will be the commencement of a state of anarchy and disorganization by the side of which the condition of China during the last ten years, will appear to have been one of prosperity and peace. Its unity as an Empire will disappear, and the disjointed members will turn to foreign protection for th e tranquillity which they will look for in vain among contending native factions".(1)

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(1) A & P 1863 (3104) p 9.

Indeed, it was the conviction that the Taiping movement had by this stage lost any popular support it might once have enjoyed that became one of the justifications used for aiding in its suppression. After receiving reports of the repulse by the mass of the populace of an attempt by the rebels to capture Chusan Island early in 1862, Russell wrote, "It was obvious that unless the Chinese would themselves act, it was useless for foreigners to try and rid the country of the Taipings; but now that a spirit of resistance to these scourges is shown, we ought to help the people and encourage their Government to resist their destructive progress".(1)

The standard by which the rebels were judged in this respect by British officials tended to be very much a nineteenth century, liberal standard.

> "The right of the Taepings to be considered as a political body, as distinguished from a mere force, will be established by the adhesion of the wealthy and trading class of the natives" Bruce wrote in January, 1862. "This is the best test to apply to the claims of the various pretenders to supreme force who are found in different parts of China; and it is desirable that this

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(1) A & P 1862 (3058) p 16; cf. also Bruce, cit. above p.142 , "The 'hundred names' and they alone must settle the question".

"species of national recognition should precede any more intimate relations between us and them".(1)

A middle class national movement of resistance to the Manchus, imagining such to have been possible in China at that time, would have won recognition and probably encouragement, but a peasant revolt, almost by definition, was not national. In any case, by 1862, a claim to any kind of popular support, gentry, traders or peasants, was denied the Taipings by British officials in China. They merely represented "the dangerous classes".

Admitting the limitations of this view of the movement, it is important not to assume that the attitude of mid-nineteenth century British imperialism towards national mov e-ments in trading areas was identical with its later attitude. About 1860 Utilitarian-Benthamite views on empire and trade still predominated in British political and economic thinking, and although the tide was beginning to turn towards imperial protectionism an optimistic belief in the existence of a natural world market was still almost axiomatic. The main obstacle in the way of the free working of this market was not nationalism but Mercantilism, which survived in the

(1) A & P 1862 (2976) p143; cf. also P.D.vol 165 (1862) col. 1807, where the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Layard, denied that the rebellion was a patriotic Chinese movement of resistance to the Manchus on the ground that "not a single Chinese of respectability- not a man of landed property, literature, or of trade - had joined the rebels".

policies of autocratic, out-dated governments such as that of China.(1) Popular movements of revolt against governments of this kind were to be encouraged rather than otherwise, as had been done in the case of the South American republics and Italy. The Taipings had appeared in something of this light in 1853, and if they failed to win consistent British approval this was not on account of any suspected modern-type economic nationalism in the movement but on account of its failure, in the eyes of the British government, to promise the basic political and social conditions for trade.

The extension of this argument from nationalism in China to the suggestion that fear of the Taipings as the vanguard of nationalist movements throughout Asia influenced the official British view of the rebellion is even more difficult to accept. Whether or not the Mutiny in India was in any sense an "echo" of the Taiping rebellion, the connection does not seem to have been drawn at the time. The only suggestion of a fear that India might be stirred by events in China that I have met with was the alarm of "the Times" in September, 1859, lest news of the British repulse at Taku "fly through China....(and) agitate all the bazaars in India, and penetrate even the ravines of Nepaul".(2) But neither "the Times" nor

(1) On the Mercantilist type policies of the Manchu government see C.J.Ch'en The State Economic Policies of the Ch'ing Government, 1840-95 (U.of L. thesis, 1956).

(2) See "Times" Sept.16-17 and Oct 22,1859. On Aug. 15,1853, in a leader praising the rebellion as a national movement of resistance to foreign rulers, "Times" suggested it

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any other observer seems to have seen the Taipings as having this kind of influence. The usual line of argument was, indeed, not from events in China to their effects in India, but rather the reverse. England's expensive military and political committments in India, acquired in the first place by interfering in the internal struggles of that country, were frequently cited as warnings against becoming involved in a similar way in China,(1) while Wade used the Indian parallel to warn the Manchus away from direct foreign intervention at the beginning of 1861. If the Mutiny in India and the Taiping rebellion were the first two waves of the rising tide of Asian nationalism, the latter at least was not seen in those terms by British officials concerned with policy in China about 1860.

Another rather anachronistic argument is that which suggests that British hostility was provoked by the socialistic element in the Taiping programme. This feature of the rebellion was certainly observed by British officials, at least in its early years. Bowring, for example, noted in 1854 that "an absolute community of goods and no right of property"

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might have some importance for India - not in stimulating a similar movement there, however, but in possible frontier disputes in Tibet, if Manchu control was removed.

(1) this page.. See below cc. 8 and 10 for examples, pp 289, 377, 386.

was reported to exist among the rebels, while in 1856 Alcock wrote of "a saturnalia of social anarchists" as likely to result from success of the rebellion.(1) But for the most part official reports did not credit the rebels with having any sustained and organised social system. The few which indicated otherwise did not suggest that the economic system of the rebels was fundamentally different from that prevailing under the Manchus. Robertson in 1857 reported that under the rebels "the Husbandman cultivates his land and the produce accrues to himself", while Forrest in 1861 simply reported monthly exactions of tribute from the villages, but not more.(2) Bruce expressed the fear that if the rebels triumphed China would be "reduced to a mass of agriculturists governed by a theocracy", and insofar as he credited them with any social system at all it was its agrarianism, not its socialism, which alarmed him. There would simply be no place for trade and industry in a Taiping state. Bruce was, it may be added, rather sceptical of the sincerity of the proposals brought forward by Hung's cousin,

(1) F.O.228/164 Bowring to Clarendon June 11,1854, and Bombay Quarterly Review, April, 1856, p297.

(2) See above pp 117-18 and 154-5 . T.T.Meadows, in his book The Chinese and their Rebellions (1856) p457 noted the tendencies toward a primitive communism in the rebellion, but he presented it chiefly as a "politico-religious" movement.

Hung Jen-kan, for the introduction of western science, and thought these merely a move to win western sympathy.(1)

Difficult to accept, save as a very general consideration in the minds of British officials, is the argument that fear of action by other powers prompted British intervention. Had such action actually occurred before 1862 it is probable that it would have been a sufficient cause for British action also, but Hail's suggestion that the mere prospect of Russian intervention at the beginning of 1861 was a major reason for the change in British policy is not supported by the evidence of Wade's talks in Peking, or by Bruce's despatches at the time. Bruce, in fact, rather discounted the danger of extensive aid from the Russians, arguing in July, 1862, for example, that

> "though I have no reason to doubt they will see with pleasure the suppression of the insurrection, I do not apprehend that they are likely to be active in promoting any serious improvement of the Chinese forces in the North of China. I think there is a feeling among them that the Chinese, well disciplined and armed, would require to be treated with ménagement, and that territorial questions would not be so easy of settlement if her national forces were more developed".(2)

(1) A & P 1861 (2754) pp 91,131 and A & P 1862 (2976) p.52.
(2) F.O.17/372 Bruce to Russell July 2, 1862, and F.O.17/370 Bruce to Russell April 13, 1862.

Bruce certainly counted both France and Russia as powers which would be less inclined than England to look upon the break up of China as a misfortune,[1] but with him this kind of fear worked in favour of the idea of limiting the extent of British intervention lest their ambitions be provoked. The Foreign Office was advised about possible Russian moves by the British ambassador in St. Petersburg, and was naturally interested in the question. But the practical difficulties in the way of effective Russian assistance in the Yangtze area were recognised, and there was no alarm expressed at the idea of the Russians ousting the British from their trade on the river.[2] Insofar as fear of other powers stealing a march on her existed, it was a general rather than a specific fear on England's part, and was not an immediate or major reason for the adoption of a policy of intervention in 1862.

The argument that the British government intervened in defence of the opium trade, and especially in defence of the revenue derived from that trade by the government of India, seems obviously to have much truth in it. About one sixth of the Government's revenue in India at this time came from the trade in opium,[3] while the strict prohibition of opium

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(1) F.O.17/373 Bruce to Russell July 8, 1862.
(2) For reports on Russian interest see F.O.228/318 Russell to Bruce March 25 and April 8, 1862; F.O.228/337 Russell to Bruce Feb.23, 1863; also A & P 1863 (3104) pp 121,155.
(3) See Appendix B, Table 7.

smoking was a well known feature of Taiping rule, whereas the Manchu government had agreed to legalize the trade in 1858. It is when one comes to look for precise evidence to support this argument from general considerations that difficulties arise.

In the first place, it is to be remembered that the prohibition of opium smoking under severe penalties was no new thing in China, and not in itself likely to cause great alarm to opium traders who were well used to smuggling in the drug with the connivance of many Chinese. In June, 1854, Bowring considered that,

> "with reference to the one great article of import, opium, it is most likely that the general disorganization will tend to promote rather than diminish its sale. The severe penalties proclaimed by Tae-ping-wang against the use of the drug will probably be just as inoperative as all the Imperial thunderings have been".(1)

Further, the effect of the rebellion upon the trade does not seem to have occasioned great alarm among traders. In May, 1856, the head of Jardine, Matheson & Co., one of the greatest opium houses in China, noted that the rebels were "making head again" near Shanghai.

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(1) F.O.228/164 Bowring to Clarendon June 5, 1854.

"It is somewhat difficult to form any very decided opinion as to the future from the contradictory reports current as to the strength and intentions of the Rebels", he wrote, "but I am inclined to think that the demand for opium will not be materially interfered with for any length of time, from the experience the dealers have had in finding outlets for it in the event of the usual channels being closed or partly so".(1)

A few months later the firm's agent at Shanghai commented on a report that opium was being smoked at Nanking that this "will probably swell their numbers considerably".(2)

After 1860 especially, when many more English observers visited the rebels, friend and foe alike agreed upon the continued prevalence of the habit.

"Though the use of opium is strictly forbidden", wrote Rev. Griffith John, a missionary who was a strong advocate of the rebel cause, after a visit to Soochow in 1860, "yet we know that it is largely consumed by them. Both the common soldiers and many of the chiefs partake of it freely.... Continued applications were

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(1) J.M. & Co., Private Letter Book (1854-6) p 186, to R.S.Cowie, May 9, 1856. The copies of the letters are unsigned, but they were probably from David Jardine.

(2) ibid., Local Correspondence - (Shanghai), Jan.9, 1857.

made for opium and arms".[1]

In May, 1861, Parkes reported that opium was freely smoked outside the walls of Nanking,[2] while in February, 1862, the North China and Japan Market Report argued that although it had been generally supposed that the rebels abstained from the use of opium, "this is contradicted by everyone who has come into contact with them, for it is one of the first things they ask for when they meet foreigners". It added, in fine yellow press style, "it would appear that they greedily use opium to excite themselves in committing the atrocities they do".[3] Whatever the truth of that, there was certainly some truth in its other claim, for comments on the continued interest of the rebels in opium are very common in contemporary British reports upon them.[4]

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(1) cit. R.Wardlaw Thompson Griffith John (1907), p.137.
(2) A & P 1862 (2976) p26; cf.ibid.pp56-7; also S.Lane-Poole, op.cit., vol I pp 421-2.
(3) A & P 1862 (2976) p 154.
(4) For other official comments note A & P 1859 Sess 2 (2571) p.451, where Wade reports a conversation with a Cantonese - "He himself smoked and so, he said, do one-third of the people of Nankin; not openly, however, for indulgence in the vice is forbidden by law, nor is the drug openly sold;" also A & P 1861 (2754) p160, Bruce to Russell Sept.20,1860 - "Beyond what is required to clothe their troops, the insurgents seem to buy little but opium and arms".
For firsthand, unofficial comments on the rebels interest in opium still, see L.Oliphant Narrative of the Earl of Elgin's Mission (1859) vol.II, p.330; G.J.Wolseley Narrative of the War in China in 1860 (1862) pp 347-8 ("To say that the (Taipings) deserve any praise for their proclaimed laws prohibiting the use of opium is absurd....it will be laughed at by every man who has lately paid the Yang-tse-kiang a visit at any point where the rebel territories touch upon it.

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By the time British intervention against the rebellion actually occurred, therefore, it is safe to say that there was considerable scepticism among British observers, official and non-official, about this aspect of the rebellion.(1) Nor have I found any evidence of pressure being put upon the British Government to act against it for the sake of the opium trade or revenue, although it could no doubt be argued that it did not need to be urged to do so. Yet the absence of any evidence of such pressure weakens the argument that opium was a conscious or major issue for the British government. Jardine, Matheson & Co. were, in fact, very critical of the policy of intervention, and there is some evidence also that J. Dent., of Dent & Co., the second of the great opium houses, also opposed the policy. In fact the whole argument that the China merchants in general and the opium merchants

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We visited many such places, and at all, as at Nankin, the great cry was for opium and arms".); also Wesleyan Missionary Notices May 1862 p 71, (where Rev.J.Cox reported his guide in Nanking as pointing out two streets and saying "Canton men live here; they all smoke opium"); cf. on the other hand A.F.Lindley, op.cit., vol II pp 555ff who says all offenders were punished with decapitation. Lindley's experience of the Taipings was mainly with the Chung Wang's forces, in which discipline and organisation were probably better than elsewhere.

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Note, for example, that even an article highly favourable to the Taipings in the London Quarterly Review Apr.,1861, stated (p232) that, "With regard to the provisions directed against opium, we have good reason to believe that the Tae Pings are not faithful to their principles; but that, on the contrary,

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in particular urged such a policy upon the government is open to challenge.(1)

Nor does it appear that the British government in India advocated intervention against the rebellion, though it certainly did not oppose it, as did many of the merchants. India Office correspondence about 1860-2, both with the Foreign Office in London and the Finance Department in India itself, reflects no great alarm for the future of the opium revenue.(2) Such doubts as existed came from the anti-opium campaign in England, rather than from any prospect of political change in China. But the Times of India, a pro-Taiping paper, felt by October, 1862, that the opium revenue was at last safe from the "ignorant opposition" of English philanthropists,(3)

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our unscrupulous countrymen who trade in it find a good market among them as among Imperialists".

(1) this page... See below, chap.8. On Dent and Jardine, Matheson as the two leading opium houses at this time note Letters and Journals of James, 8th Earl of Elgin (1872) ed. T. Walrond, p.226, and J.K.Fairbank, op.cit., p 226.

(2) This statement is based on an examination of correspondence in the India Office Library (Letters to India on Finances 1860-4; Financial Letters from India 1860-3; and Home Correspondence: Political and Secret 1860-4), as well as of the "Domestic Various" volumes in the F.O. files in the P.R.O., which include F.O.-India Office correspondence on affairs relating to China.

(3) Times of India Oct. 20, 1862; for the pro-rebel, anti-intervention sentiments of this paper see also March 22, May 5 and June 27, 1862 and Feb.21, 1863.

while Samuel Laing, Financial Member of Council in the Government of India from the end of 1860 until 1862, saw "no reason why the revenue derived by India from opium should be considered more precarious than that derived by England from gin and tobacco."(1) On the other hand, Laing was also the author of a pamphlet, published in 1863, in which he emphasised "how intimately the prosperity of India and the course of trade between India and England are affected by the commercial relations between India and China", and argued in favour of intervention against the rebellion. But Laing did not specifically attack the rebels for being anti-opium, and referred only to their "devastations" destroying the prospects of trade in general.(2) The argument from opium seems to me at least not proven.

The crux of the problem from the point of view of the British government was the destruction and disruption which accompanied the rebellion and was believed to be central to it. It was basically a question of law and order.

> "It appears to Her Majesty's Government, after a long experience, that the Taipings are incapable of establishing a regular authority or of giving protection to the peaceable inhabitants of the country they over-

(1) cit. R. Temple Men and Events of My Time in India (1882), p.220.

(2) S. Laing England's Mission in the Far East (1863) esp. pp.49-55.

"run with their savage hordes", Russell wrote in May, 1862, "Her Majesty's Government therefore consider it a duty, within the limits I have mentioned, to favour the restoration of order....."(1)

The primary concern was, of course, not to protect the "peaceable inhabitants", but British treaty rights and trading prospects.(2) These faced "practical annihilation" in the "process of demolition" which accompanied the rebellion, Bruce wrote in April, 1862, adding

"Any policy in China founded on the assumption (which is generally the true one in civil contests) that tranquillity will be restored as soon as one of two political bodies contending for mastery has triumphed over the other, is founded upon a complete misapprehension of the character and composition of the Taeping insurrection. The experience of several years, and the testimony of all foreigners who have been among them, show that they are unable to govern.... I do not think any grounds exist for assuming that a regular government can spring out of the anarchical and disorderly elements which constitute the physical force of the insurrection. An impassable gulf separates it from

(1) F.O.228/318 Russell to Bruce May 6, 1862.
(2) "Horrible as the proceedings of the Taepings are, murdering as they do men, women and children whever they go, it is for the Imperial authorities and not for H.M.G. to protect the

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"the orderly and industrious part of the population".(1)
The justice and correctness of this view need not be debated here. It was, by 1862, firmly established as the consular-Foreign Office view of the rebellion, the product of a whole series of reports and observations which went back to at least 1854, and confirmed into dogma by the experience of attempting to treat with the rebellion during 1861.

To this frequently expressed conviction that the rebellion would simply destroy the basic, elementary conditions for treaty relations and trade in China must be added the suspicion that, assuming the rebels did establish some kind of government over China, they were likely to prove more difficult to handle that the Manchus themselves. Bonham had expressed the opposite hope in 1853, but in general Taiping professions of friendliness and brotherhood towards foreigners were not much believed in. This was partly the result of the idea among some British officials that the native Chinese were more deeply dyed in assumptions of universal supremacy over the "outer barbarians" than were officials of Manchu race. Whether a Chinese dynasty would be more favourable to foreign interests than the Manchu was not certain, Alcock wrote in

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subjects of the Emperor from Taeping atrocities. You will be careful, therefore, to distinguish those cases in regard to which we have a right and obligation from those in which we have neither". (Russell to Bruce Nov.26,1862, in A & P 1863 (3104), p.93).

(1) this page A & P 1862 (3058) p.19.

January, 1853, but "so far as our experience extends of the two races, the Tartars have been the less bigoted and blind in their prejudice against Foreign intercourse of the two.." (1) Bruce also came strongly to the conclusion that the rebels were indeed worse in this respect than the Manchus, though more on grounds of religion than of race.

> "The pretensions of the Taipings are more extravagant than those of the Imperial Government; their Head issues declarations of the divine will to natives and foreigners, and the subordinate chiefs publish decrees inviting obedience to this divinely constituted Power. But as yet there is no evidence of a recognition of the Treaty rights of foreigners, or of a wish to conciliate their friendship by respecting and considering their interests." (2)

The fear that the Taipings would not acknowledge British treaty rights in China was certainly present, and helped incline British policy in favour of the Manchus. But this fear seems to have rested not on any assessment of fervently nationalist political principles among the rebels so much as on the suspicion that their racial and religious assumptions would lead them to assert claims to some kind of universal

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(1) F.O.228/161 Alcock to Bowring Jan. 24, 1853; cf. also J. Bowring Autobiographical Recollections (1877) pp 226-7.

(2) A & P 1863 (3104) p.9.

supremacy over "tributary" nations. Treaty relations with such a power would be quite as difficult as they had ever been with the Manchus.(1)

Religious considerations pure and simple did not count for much in British policy towards the rebellion. The "blasphemy" and "superstitions" of the rebels were sometimes denounced in official reports and statements, but it can fairly be said that the British government was not very deeply concerned whether a "Christian" or a "heathen" government ruled in China, so long as it was a stable and friendly government which offered no obstacles to the development of British trade. Indeed, one of the points made against the rebels by Bruce was that their religious principles made them quite unacceptable to the mass of the Chinese people, and therefore the less likely ever to establish a stable government. In Bruce's view, the Manchus, though hardly popular, were at least more acceptable to the Chinese people, because they preserved Chinese traditional beliefs.(2) As

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(1) Note, for example, Bruce to Russell Feb.23, 1862, in F.O.17/370 - "A Divine Commission to rule the world engrafted on the contempt and arrogance characteristic of the low Cantonese type would speedily display itself in pretensions and in indifference to treaty privileges which would embroil us with them"; see also A & P1862 (2976), p.56.

(2) "The profession of novel doctrines resting on the testimony of a modern and obscure individual must tend not only to deprive the revolt of its character as a national rising against the Tartar yoke, but must actually transfer to the Tartars and their adherents the prestige of upholding national tradition and principles against the assaults of a numerically insignificant sect". (Bruce to Russell Aug.1, 1860 in A & P1861 (2754) p.91); also A&P 1862 (2976) pp52-3, and

above p 139n

far as possible Bruce wished to dissociate the British government from the activities of the Christian missionaries in China, being convinced that,

> "foreign Governments will most effectually serve Christianity in China by abstaining from protecting it as if it were a matter in which they have an interest, for the Chinese Government do not yet understand that Governments can be interested in this question except in a political sense".(1)

Russell approved these views. There was thus no tendency in British policy, as there was in French, to set out to serve the advancement of Western Christianity in China.(2) Suppression of the rebellion was certainly not undertaken in that spirit on the British side.

If the advancement of Christianity was no part of the British government's policy on this question, the advancement of trade certainly was. As a motive for British action against the rebellion, however, it was the prospect rather than the fact of disruption to trade in China by the rebels which dhiefly counted. Up to the time when intervention became British policy there had been no serious and lasting

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(1) A &P 1863 (3104) p.33; ibid.p.43 for Russell's agreement.

(2) On the importance of religious considerations on French policy in China at this time see Cady, op.cit., pp.129-30, 139; Tong Ling-tch'ouang, op.cit., pp 229-44; and Prosper Giquel La Politique Francaise en Chine depuis les traites de 1858 et de 1860 (1872) pp 44-6.

disturbance to foreign trade in China which could be clearly put down to the effects of the rebellion. T. R. Banister, in his History of the External Trade of China has written,

> "The total effect of the Taiping Rebellion on the foreign trade of China is, of course, incalculable; the development that might have taken place if the sources of supply had not been devastated and if widespread ruin and impoverishment had not cut down demand can only remain a matter for speculation".

But he is obliged to add, "It is remarkable that, even in spite of the fact that.....(about 1858)...this terrible and ruinous civil war was at its height, so much progress in foreign trade has actually to be recorded".(1) This remains true even beyond 1858 and up to 1862. Progress is still to be recorded, especially in the export trade.(2)

As regards this aspect of British trade with China, there was a steady increase at Shanghai, even after the rebel occupation of Kiangsu province in 1860. Despite disturbances and occasional interference, supplies of tea and silk continued to come down from the interior. In October, 1861,

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(1) T.R.Banister A History of the External Trade of China 1843-81 (1931), p.28.

(2) For the trade figures on which the following argument is based seeAppendix B.

Bruce rather grudgingly admitted, "to me it is rather a matter of surprise that trade should continue at all, than that occasional losses should be suffered. The export of silk between June, 1860, and June, 1861, has, in spite of these disadvantages, amounted to 85,000 bales".(1) In July, 1862, Staveley also reported from Shanghai that "Europeans continue to visit the rebel country for the purpose of trade and are treated with civility; large quantities of silk have been brought into Shanghae during the last fortnight, and trade seems in a thriving state".(2) On the other hand, this is not the whole story. Silk supplies fell away disastrously after 1862 with the destruction of the mulberry trees by the rebels, while according to a letter from the chairman of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce to Medhurst in March, 1862, the supplies of tea reaching the port no longer came across the old land routes, but down the Yangtze.

"Although Shanghae can carry a considerable trade by the Yangtzekiang in both imports and produce, " the letter added, "yet it can never attain its former importance until the towns of Soochow and Hangchow are recaptured from the rebels, and the transit to the westward thrown

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(1) A & P 1862 (2976) p.68.

(2) A & P 1863 (3104) p.43

"open; whilst should, by any chance, the river traffic be interrupted, all trade at the port must entirely cease".(1)

But despite these fears for the future, until 1862 tea and silk supplies continued to reach Shanghai in considerable quantities. The major disruption to China's export trade caused by the rebellion came after British intervention began.

Apart from opium, the British import trade into China fluctuated a great deal more before 1862 than did the export trade, but in this, too, progress is to be recorded. The market for British manufactured goods in China at this time was far from strong and in any period of crisis was likely to slump disastrously, as happened at Shanghai in 1853-4. But apart from those two years, it does not appear that the rebellion had any very disturbing effect on the not very great flow of British goods into China up to 1861. On the other hand, the sale of these goods was stagnant during 1861-2, and a temporary slump in British imports occurred during 1862-3. This slump was probably due in part to the rebellion, for import figures rose considerably in the later sixties, but it was also partly due to the speculative nature of the boom in imports sent through the customs after the signing of the

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(1) A & P 1862 (2976) pp 7-8.

Treaty of Tientsin. It provides some evidence for arguing that the rebellion was in fact upsetting conditions for British trade before 1862, but on the whole trade figures, whether for exports or imports, do not reflect this very clearly.

Except in the case of Ningpo, where there was clear evidence of the decay of foreign trade under rebel rule, British officials argued in general rather than specific terms about the effect of the rebellion upon trade.

> "Facts have proved", Russell wrote to Bruce in November, 1862, "that a resident population, security for persons and property, the pursuit of industry and the prosecution of trade, are incompatible with the occupation of a town by the bands of murderers and robbers who are called Taepings".(1)

Further, although they did not generally distinguish any particular branch of trade, certainly not opium, as requiring protection, there is some evidence to suggest that they were especially concerned to secure, as best they could within the limits of the committments they were prepared to make, a stronger market for British manufactures in China. It is notable that a merchant house such as Jardine, Matheson & Co., which did its main import business in opium and found this, as well as its export business in tea and silk, continuing strong despite the rebellion, was very critical of the policy

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(1) A & P 1863 (3104) p.93.

of intervention. Bruce on one occasion distinguished the interests of such mercantile houses in China from "the manufacturing interests of Great Britain",(1) while Palmerston, defending the policy of intervention in the House of Commons, argued that

> "those who view this question only in the aspect which it bears upon the particular merchants who export to China, and who have establishments in that country, take a very narrow and limited view of the question. These merchants in reality only form the outfalls by which the thousand rills of upland industry in this country find their way to the great oceans of the markets of the world".(2)

The Taiping rebellion was, by its alleged anarchical character, an obstacle in the way of the free flow of British manufactures into the "great oceans of the markets of the world", and if it could not be easily got round, as had been attempted in 1861, it must be swept aside.

As a reason for British intervention against the Taiping rebellion then, the general proposition that it was done in defence of British trade in China seems to me to mean essentially that it was done in defence of the future prospects of that trade, especially the future prospects for British manufactures.

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(1) A & P 1864 (3295) p.43

(2) P.D: vol 175 (1864) col.973; also below ch.7.

But in seeking to explain why British policy changed as it did from a sort of neutrality to limited intervention in the early part of 1862, it is not enough to set out a list of large, general reasons of the kind just discussed. By themselves they imply that the change in policy was decided upon by a process of logical analysis, and carried out by British officials who had all these reasons clearly in the forefront of their minds. In fact the change of policy came about as an unplanned and immediate response to the pressure of events. This is not to suggest that it was simply the fortuitous result of such events, for it is plain that the tendency in British policy towards intervention was strong before 1862, and that, in terms of the official British view of the situation in China, it was a logical development. But it was not a certain development. It is at least arguable whether direct British action against the rebels would ever have been taken but for the second attack upon Shanghai, although a large measure of indirect aid to the Manchus probably would have been given, and to some extent had already been given, before that event. "We had nothing to do with (the rebels) until they approached the treaty ports", said a government spokesman in the House of Commons, "and they might have gone on fighting for centuries if they had

not threatened those ports".[1] Like most government apologies for policy this puts the matter in too simple a way, but there was some force in the argument.

This raises one final point which should not be overlooked in any explanation of why England intervened against the rebellion. The rebel threat to Shanghai at the beginning of 1862 was to a considerable extent the result of their defeats in the central Yangtze valley during 1861. The victories of Tseng Kuo-fan's armies had, by the end of that year, deprived them of their former main base in Anhui and virtually driven them back upon the coastal provinces, where conflict with the western treaty powers was much more likely to develop.[2] British intervention against the Taipings cannot be explained without reference to the larger military fortunes of the rebellion.

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(1) ibid, col.937.

(2) A.E.Wilson, op.cit., ch.6 etc., suggested this was Tseng's strategy; on this note, also, Parkes in A & P 1862 (2976) p.95.

PART II: UNOFFICIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE REBELLION AND TOWARDS OFFICIAL POLICY.

CHAPTER VIII

BRITISH MERCHANTS AND THE TAIPING REBELLION

The China market was theoretically rainbow's end for the British merchant. In 1843, returned from negotiating the Treaty of Nanking, Sir Henry Pottinger promised them that "all the mills in Lancashire could not make stocking stuff sufficient for one of its provinces",(1) while twenty years later, after the conclusion of the Treaty of Tientsin, Samuel Laing wrote,

> "Our trade with China has reached a point which makes it impossible for any Government to ignore its existence and to abstain from all action if it be imperilled. And yet this trade is merely in its infancy. A slight acquaintance with what China really is suffices to convince us that, when the barriers which have impeded our intercourse are fairly removed, there is no limit to the extension of English commerce, and that this commerce is destined to exercise an immense influence on the fourth part of the human race.... The trade between the British Empire and China will go on increasing year by

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(1) cit. A & P 1859 Sess. 2 (2571) p.244.

year if not checked by political events, until it attains a gigantic magnitude".(1)

"If every inhabitant of China took from us, in any form, imports to the extent of 5/- each", another writer calculated, "the gross value of the trade would be £200,000,000 a year".(2) Few among the merchants doubted that a large pot of gold was really there. The problem was to get at it effectively.

Great private fortunes were made in the trade with China during these years, but it never fulfilled the promise that it showed on paper. In the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Taiping rebellion one of the major reasons advanced by British merchants to explain this, apart from such things as the high rate of duty upon tea in England itself and restrictive practices among the Chinese merchants, was the obstruction still offered by the Manchu government to the development of foreign trade in China. "I consider the present treaty to be contravened every day of the week by the Chinese Government themselves", Alexander Matheson stated bluntly to a Select Committee appointed by Parliament in 1847 to enquire into the reasons for the unsatisfactory state of commercial relations with China. "Chinese diplomacy upon paper and the reality are two very different things",

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(1) S.Laing, op.cit., p.50.

(2) Liverpool Daily Post, cit. London & China Express April 26, 1862, p.341.

he added.[1] In June, 1850, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce presented a memorial to the Foreign Office urging that efforts be made to extend commercial openings in China. This explained "the disappointment universally felt in respect to the results expected from the treaty of Nankin" as being in large part due to the attitude of the Chinese authorities at Canton, who had "unremittingly fomented every species of opposition to us".[2] The dissatisfaction felt by those British merchants interested in trade with China towards the Manchu government was certainly considerable about the time the Taipings emerged as a possible alternative, and one naturally looks for clear cut support on their part for the rebel cause about 1853.

On the admittedly slender evidence which I have been able to gather about early British merchant reactions to the rebellion, however, it seems to me easy to exaggerate the extent to which positive approval was given the movement. This is not to suggest that the merchants as a group were hostile to it. Like British consular officials, they certainly placed hopes, and in some cases high hopes, in the rebellion as promising an opportunity for improving their situation in China. But information on what was for them the main point of concern, namely, the real feelings of

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(1) A & P 1847 (654) Evidence, qq.2691, 2703.
(2) Manchester C. of C. Procs.(1849-58) pp 128-9, also pp34-6.

the rebels towards foreigners and foreign trade, was so much less certain and authentic than the information received about the religious character of the rebellion that, as a group, the merchants seem to have taken a less consistently hopeful view during 1853 than did the missionaries.

At one extreme was Alexander Calder, who claimed to have traded in China since East India Company days and to have had direct experience of the Manchu government by virtue of having once been the counsul for Denmark.(1) Calder wrote the Foreign Office in November, 1853, recommending a policy of active support for the rebellion. Strict neutrality would, he argued, be "fatal to our interests", since without foreign intervention division and struggle in China might well become chronic. To support the Manchus would be to perpetuate the system of exclusivism which chills and narrows our intercourse with a great people", and to attempt to uphold "a ruined cause". England should "turn to something more durable, more promising, and countenance it". Calder therefore concluded by suggesting, in rather "Schoolboys' Own" fashion, that three steamboats and a "Secret agent" should be sent to "Yung Sue Tsuen" (Hung Hsiu-ch'üan). The outlay would be small; the possible

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(1) On this practice among foreign merchants in China at this time see Fairbank, op.cit., pp213-14.

gains tremendous.(1)

In contrast to these views may be set some of those which appeared in the British press in China and which may reasonably be taken to have reflected and to have helped to form merchant opinion on the question there. For the Hong Kong Overland Register and Prices Current the rebellion was "a dark and ominous affair, which time alone can unravel". It attacked "the stupid irreflecting wonder "of many, such as the Shanghai North China Herald, at the reports of the Christianity of the rebels, about which the Register itself was thoroughly sceptical. It was equally sceptical of the long term prospects of the rebels.

> "That (Hung Hsiu-ch'üan) or any or all of his present followers are fated to overthrow the present dynasty we have always doubted and we still do doubt, "it wrote in October, 1853. "One singular fact may be noticed, and it is this, that all his successes have not induced one man of rank in the kingdom, connected or disconnected with the Government, to join his standard".(2)

The China Mail, the leading paper at Hong Kong, believed the accounts of the religious fervour of the rebels to be "ridiculously highly coloured", and attacked Bonham both for

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(1) F.O.17/209 Calder to F.O., Nov. 28, 1853.
(2) See Overland Register and Prices Current May 24, July 23, Oct. 27, Dec. 27, 1853.

going to Nanking and for "negatively supporting the Rebels" with his proclamation of July 7th warning British subjects against taking any part in the struggle. The restoration of tranquillity under a purely Chinese dynasty was an event unlikely to be witnessed in that age, the Mail predicted.(1) The North China Herald, however, did hope to witness it, and it attacked both the Register and the Mail for their hostile views of the rebellion. At the beginning of 1854 the Herald still believed that Hung was

> "hastening forward with rapid strides the real opening of China and her union with the Western world; and we trust that under his more enlightened sway our merchants will speedily exchange present difficulties and impediments for all the advantages of a free, reciprocal and unblemished traffick".(2)

By the middle of that year, however, the Herald had changed its views, to the great satisfaction of its Hong Kong rivals, and after reports of the visits to Nanking by the American Commissioner McLane, and by Medhurst and Lewin Bowring, it joined them in denouncing "the crazy and deluded fanatics in possession of Nanking".(3)

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(1) See China Mail May 26, July 7, Oct.27, etc. 1853. The columns of the China Mail during April and May, 1853, carried a correspondence between two writers for and against the rebellion styling themselves "Progress" and "Conservative". "Progress" soon left the field to "Conservative", who was very probably a Canton merchant. He favoured intervention against the rebellion in return for further treaty concessions from the Manchus.

See next page for ff.(2) & (3)...

It is in the nature of the press, especially of colonial press, to present strong views, and these extremes of opinion probably give a rather false picture of the true state of merchant opinion on the question during 1853. The detailed business correspondence of Jardine, Matheson & Co. reveals no very strong views either for or against the Taipings, some doubts as to their real attitude towards foreigners, and much concern for the immediate effect of the rebellion on trade. For example, David Jardine reported the "disheartening intelligence" of the fall of Nanking to some of his correspondents in India at the end of April, adding, "It is said that the rebels of late have expressed no friendly feelings towards Foreigners in consequence of a number of American vessels purchased by the Chinese authorities having proceeded up the river towards Nankin".(1) He also expressed the conviction that, "it is now pretty evident

> that whichever of the Contending parties prevails, the disorganised state of the country will continue to exercise an injurious influence on all commerce for some time to come".(2)

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(2) from previous page... North China Herald Jan.7,1854 (cit. E.P.Boardman, op.cit., p7n.); for controversy with the Hong Kong papers see China Mail Jan.26,1854 and Overland Register July 23, 1853.
(3) North China Herald July 8, 1854 (cit.Boardman, p.122); cf. China Mail July 27,1854.

(1) this page... J.M.& Co., Private Letter Book (1852-4) p115, April 21,1853 to J.R.Hadow.
(2) ibid, p125, May 21, 1853, to C.B.Skinner.

Dallas, the firm's agent in Shanghai, also reported in April that, "Nothing certain is known as to the intentions of the rebels towards foreigners, but as they have a large army and are likely to be joined by all the vagabonds in the country, it is thought only prudent to be prepared for any contingency".(1)

Later reports on the rebels do not appear to have caused any marked swing in their favour. Early in May, after Bonham's return from Nanking, Dallas wrote,

> "There is no doubt whatever of their being Christian protestants hostile to Roman Catholicism and priest-craft in any shape. This will at once account for the opinions of the French concerning them. They declare inveterate (?) war not only against opium, but against Tobacco, and they say their mission is from Heaven. They appear to be fanatics and determined to wage war against fornication and every vice. The only incongruity appears to be that the head man of them has 36 wives! Captain Fishburne (sic), his officer and Mr. Meadows are all very favourably impressed with the general bearing and efficient organisation of the rebels, but Sir George Bonham appears to think not so well of them".(2)

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(1) ibid., Private Letters (unbound) from Shanghai, Dallas to Jardine, April 12, 1853.
(2) ibid, May 7, 1853.

In June, Jardine reported to one of his correspondents in India that "the opinion is beginning to force itself upon people's minds that the days of Tartar rule in China are numbered", but does not appear to have regarded this prospect with any particular approval.(1) At the end of July, Dallas still felt that whether the ultimate designs of the rebels towards foreigners were really friendly or not was a point on which there was "yet some doubt", and [redacted] certainly showed no confidence that commercial prospects in China were likely to be better under Taiping than Manchu rule.(2) In the Jardine, Matheson correspondence about 1853-4 no clear cut support for the rebels at Nanking is apparent, while the suppression of the risings on the coast was greeted with relief and approval.(3) As a source of evidence on the early opinions of British merchants in China about the rebellion the main conclusion suggested by this correspondence is that they did not feel sure enough about its attitude to foreigners and foreign trade to accord it strong support.

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(1) ibid, Private Letter Book (1852-4) p132, June 26,1853, to J.R.Hadow.

(2) ibid., Local Correspondence, Shanghai (Box 1853-6), July 31, 1853 (no675 -3); cf.however the American firm of Russell & Co. (cit. in Dennett, op.cit. p212) - I hope Tien Teh (i.e. Hung) will be successful and upset the present dynasty. We cannot be worse off, and he is said to be a liberal man". I have found nothing as definite as this in support of the Taipings in the J.M, archive,

(3) see J.M.&Co., Europe Letter Books, vols.30-1, Circular letters of Aug.21, 1854, March 14 and July 9, 1855.

As regards merchant reaction in England in 1853, it is difficult to distinguish this clearly from the general popular reaction to the rebellion, which was one of approval and support. In May, the Economist wrote,

> "Our merchants, our tea and silk dealers, our manufacturers of woollens and cottons, almost all who work, and almost all who drink tea or wear silk or are concerned in trade, are deeply interested in the consequences of the rebellion in China".(1)

Although itself favouring a policy of non-intervention, it printed, in this same issue, a circular from the firm of Moffatt & Co. of Fenchurch St., in which it was suggested that

> "Should foreign interposition be happily successful in maintaining order in China a highly favourable opportunity will occur for extending friendly relations with that vast Empire, and opening its untold commercial resources to Western enterprise".

But this was, the circular went on, "a somewhat remote contingency", and meanwhile there must be great anxiety for future supplies of teas and the security of commercial transactions generally in China. The Economist itself was confident that there was no serious danger to Western trade, the Chinese being, like the English, natural traders, and

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(1) Economist May 21, 1853.

it continued to urge a policy of non-intervention. "Adhering to the character of merchants", it noted with approval in August, "our people in China profess a perfect neutrality, and, whichever way the contest may end, they will probably be equally well protected".(1)

More than purely business calculations helped to form the opinions of merchants in England on the subject, for like the great majority of their countrymen, they were impressed by the religious character of the movement. Hewett & Co., also of Fenchurch St., issued a pamphlet on The Religious Precepts of the Tae-ping Dynasty which they "presented gratuitously" to their customers. Besides advertising their own wares, this provided translations of some of the religious documents of the rebels, introduced by a letter from the firm expressing their strong support for the cause. As befitted such a pamphlet, the letter emphasised the religious rather than the commercial benefits to be looked for from the rebellion, and suggested that any attempt to stem the progress of the rebels, "if they may be so called", would be fruitless.(2) But the publication of a pamphlet on the religious aspect of the rebellion by a business firm illustrates the then prevalent

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(1) ibid., Aug. 6, 1853

(2) The Religious Precepts of the Taeping Dynasty (1853), printed by W.Hewett & Co., (copy in B.M.)

idea that Christianity and Commerce went hand in hand. "Hitherto Christianity and Commerce have gone together", wrote one paper at this time. "As Christianity spreads, civilisation will grow, with all its corresponding wants. It is impossible to anticipate the effect of Christianization upon China. No country in the world is better adapted from situation, climate and products for extensive commerce".(1) The two ideas went naturally together in nineteenth century England, and the fact that the rebels were believed to be Christian certainly helped to make them appear also as favourable to commerce.

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(1) British Banner May 18, 1853; cf. also Calcutta Review March, 1854, p.139 - "The wider opening of China, consequent on the establishment of a dynasty professing the Christian religion, and friendly to foreigners, may be expected to produce a rapid advancement in the material prosperity of the country and the moral improvement of the people. The arts and sciences of Christendom will be introduced. Steam vessels, railways and the electric telegraph will bring into close proximity each remote extremity of the Empire. The internal resources of the country will be developed. An impetus will be given to native produce and manufactures. The materials of a lucrative, reproductive and mutually beneficial commerce between the Eastern and Western worlds will be multiplied. The artificial wants and tastes created by a progressive civilisation will cause a fresh demand for imports from foreign regions; and the looms of Manchester and Leeds, the foundries of Sheffield, Birmingham and Pittsburgh, and the ships of London, Liverpool and New York, will find additional employment". Note that all this was seen as "consequent on the establishment of a dynasty professing the Christian religion, and friendly to foreigners".

A more obviously hard headed approach than that of Hewett & Co. is seen in the memorial of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce of January 26, 1854, to Clarendon, expressing satisfaction at the appointment of Sir John Bowring as Superintendent of British trade in China and Governor of Hong Kong, and suggesting that his powers be as ample as possible. The Chamber was thinking especially of treaty revision, and suggested that the rebellion improved the prospects of getting this. After noting the unsatisfactory features of the present treaty which "stunted and crippled" British trade with China, the memorialists expressed themselves

> "not without hope that under the circumstances which seem likely to arise out of the present aspect and probable result of Chinese affairs, these and many other hindrances to the development of British trade may be removed through the active intelligence and knowledge of the Chinese character and customs so eminently possessed by our new Representative".(1)

In this the idea that the rebellion might be used indirectly to favour British trading interests in China is apparent, but there was no suggestion of offering direct aid to the Manchus in return for treaty concessions.

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(1) Manchester C. of C. Procs. (1849-58) p.370.

Any idea of abandoning neutrality was, on the contrary, explicitly rejected in a resolution of merchants in England interested in trade with China sent to Clarendon at the beginning of 1855. This was prompted by their anger with Bowring for his attempt during the Shanghai customs crisis in 1854, to secure for the Manchu government payment on the promissory notes collected by Alcock, and it called for Bowring's removal from his office. Among the complaints listed against him in this resolution was

> "2. His interference with the two Belligerent Parties in China - an interference which his predecessor Sir G. Bonham's resolution carefully to abstain from, Your Lordship's despatch of May 31st, 1853, pronounced to be one of which 'Her Majesty's Government approved as in entire conformity with their wishes and intentions'". (sic)(1)

A policy of neutrality was still in conformity with the wishes of these merchants also. Bowring defended himself by asking for examples of his interference, and by pointing to the difficulty of avoiding becoming involved in some way in "the general anarchy" prevalent in China.(2) But the suspicion

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(1) F.O.228/185 S.Gregson to Clarendon Jan.5, 1855, Enc. in Clarendon to Bowring Jan.12, 1855; cf also Manchester C. of C. Procs. (1849-58) pp 413, 420.

(2) F.O.17/230 Bowring to Clarendon May 14, 1855.

that he had not followed a really neutral policy towards the civil war in China was one of the things, though certainly not the chief thing, which earned him the criticism of China merchants in England.

The case for British intervention against the rebellion was, however, argued later in 1855 by the Shanghai merchant, James Macdonald, when on a visit to England. In a series of letters on the rebellion published in The Times during August and September, Macdonald described the rebels as having only one redeeming feature, their condemnation of opium, and he suggested that the best prospect for the extension of British privileges in China was an offer of aid on a quid pro quo basis to the Manchu government. In anticipation of this, Macdonald urged, an exploratory expedition should be sent up the Yangtze, perhaps as far as Hankow, in order to obtain information about the trading prospects there, and to seek answers to such loaded questions as, "Would the extirpation of these river pirates and brigands, if they shall be proved to be such, or the driving them from the strongholds where their presence so seriously affects our trade, necessarily imply any permanent responsibility on our part for the support of the Chinese Government, any more than our occasional attacks on the pirates on the coast?" (1) Meadows, who was then in

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(1) The Times Sept. 20, 1855, p.10; for other letters of MacDonald see Aug. 9, 14, 21 1855.

England on leave and writing his book The Chinese and their Rebellions, wrote to the Times in answer to these "injudicious recommendations" of Macdonald which, he said, would endanger rather than further the long-range commercial interests of England in China. "I beg the British commercial world to rest assured that the Chinese do know something about governing themselves", Meadows concluded, "and that, if carefully let alone, they will reappear under a stronger Government, Manchoo or native, than they have had these fifty years".(1)

On the whole, it can fairly be said that during the early and middle years of the rebellion the inclination of that part of "the British commercial world" which was directly interested in trade with China was to let things alone. Th e official policy of non-intervention won general, if not absolutely unanimous approval, while the suppression of the risings on the coast and the fact that the Taiping rebellion itself remained clear of the treaty ports during these years meant that alarm over the possible effects on trade soon passed. The short lived threat of the middle of 1856, when the Taipings destroyed Hsiang Jung's forces besieging Chinkiang and approached Soochow, created a temporary panic in Shanghai, but trade there was soon back to normal. After 1856 Western attention concentrated on the war with the Manchus and the

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(1) ibid, Oct. 1, 1855, p.5.

struggle to obtain and have ratified a new and more satisfactory treaty. The rebellion was far from the centre of the stage, as seen by European eyes, and was not an issue of controversy and discussion as it had been in 1853, and was to become again after 1860.(1)

With the ratification of the Treaty of Tientsin at the end of 1860, the rebellion became once more a dominant issue in the minds of British merchants, as of consular officials. But there is certainly no easy generalisation that can be made about their attitude in the last years of the rebellion, for it is clear that there was real division of opinion among them over the wisdom of the government policy of aid to the Manchus, though not so much over the character of the rebellion itself. Although British policy was officially justified in terms of the defence of British trading interests in China, it does not follow as the night the day from this that the merchants themselves all thought it the policy best designed to protect those interests.(2)

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(1) Elgin's trip at the end of 1858 naturally renewed interest for a time, but the main conclusion drawn appears to have been that the rebels were on their last legs, and there was no call to interfere. See Overland China Mail Dec.15,1858, Jan.15,1859; China Overland Trade Report Jan.14,1859; The Times March 2, 1859, p.12.

(2) It seems simply to have been assumed by most writers on the subject of British intervention against the Taipings that all, or nearly all, British merchants favoured and urged that policy, and were hostile to the rebels because they upset trade. (e.g.H.Cahill, op. cit., p287, and Baranowsky, op.cit., who identifies the British bourgeoisie and "capitalists" with the British Government in "smothering" the rebellion). See also Teng Ssu-yü, op.cit., p 74.

The opinion that it was not is illustrated by the Hong Kong trade paper, The China Overland Trade Report. The main English language papers in China at this time, the China Mail and the North China Herald gave fairly consistent support to the policy followed by the British government,(1) but a number of other papers did not, and among these the criticisms of the Overland Trade Report were particularly lusty.(2) In 1860, while condemning "the bootless rapacity and repulsive brigandage" of the rebels, it was no less condemnatory of Bruce's action in ordering their repulse from Shanghai by British forces. This apparent inconsistency - the paper was not remarkable for its consistency, and one is often bewildered by the logic and assumptions of its arguments - is to be explained by the fact that the Trade Report took the view that this attack by the rebels had been unnecessarily provoked by Bruce's having allowed Shanghai to become a rallying point for the defeated Imperialists.

> "Had common courtesy been extended towards the Rebel chiefs and a bona fide system of neutrality proposed, which would have left Shanghai in the hands of the Allies, the present disaster might not only have been averted, but there is no saying how far the friendly disposition

(1) The China Mail was for a time during 1860-1 fairly open minded about the rebellion, but it backed the later policy of intervention to the extent of arguing that "the radius boundary is a mistake, we cannot stop at any given boundary with the Taipings". For N.C.H. advocacy of aid to the Manchus see above p. 170 n 2.

For ff. (2) see next page....

"of the rebels might have induced them to have fostered trade. As matters now stand, a small allied force, protecting a large amount of British property, has to resist the fanatical onslaught of some 40,000 rebels, and even should the Allies succeed, they will incur the animosity of the dominant party, who at least have the trade in their hands".(1)

Nor was this all, the paper added, for if the rebels should eventually triumph, as then seemed very possible "foreigners will be placed in an entirely false position with the insurgents by this wanton, suicidal policy, and it is impossible to prognosticate where the calamity will end". In this argument two ideas very common among China merchants about this time emerge. The first, that Shanghai should be taken over altogether from the incapable Manchu government and made into a free port; the second, and more significant here, that the rebels controlled the main areas from which the foreign trade at Shanghai was drawn, and any policy which provoked their hostility towards foreigners was "suicidal".

During 1861, while still condemning the rebellion as a "devastating scourge", the Trade Report continued to attack official policy.

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(2) from previous page.... Other China papers critical of the policy of intervention and rather pro-Taiping in outlook were the Hong Kong Register and the Friend of China (see the (anon.) pamphlet The Position of Affairs in China).

(1) this page.. Overland Trade Report Aug.25,1860; also Oct.12, 1860.

> "Nothing can be clearer, "it claimed in April,"than that whether the Taipings should, as ruthless brigands, be exterminated as the foes of mankind generally - or whether they should be treated with the consideration due to a national party, nothing can be more futile, baneful nor impolitic than the present experimental, unauthorised and crotchetty system of intervention pursued by the British authorities".(1)

By intervention at this time the paper meant the encouragement given to the extension of the foreign inspectorate principle in Chinese customs to all the treaty ports, which was an important part of Bruce's plan to increase the efficiency of the Manchu government. This customs house "hobby" of the British authorities was highly unpopular among many of the China merchants, the Trade Report objecting that it merely had the effect of securing a large revenue for an Imperial Government "impotent, corrupt, sensual, selfish, perfidious and careless of consequences", without guaranteeing that this revenue would be spent on the protection of trade or the suppression of the rebellion. It suggested that if some part of the revenue, which it never doubted was in the "entire control" of the British authorities, were paid to the rebels,

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(1) ibid., April 30, 1861.

they would be given an interest in the progress of foreign trade in China instead of in its destruction, as at present.(1)

It was the following of a policy which was likely neither to conciliate nor bring about the speedy destruction of the rebellion which particularly aroused the Trade Report's opposition.

> "If the British Minister's espousal of the Imperial cause were at all calculated to overthrow the Taipings" it wrote in February, 1862, "the foreign community would lend him their co-operation almost to a man. But the tendency of his efforts is quite the reverse".

Bruce's policy of "aggressive defence" was really "greatly jeopardising British trade". The issue resolved itself into the question "whether it would be more advisable to conciliate the Taipings, or, adhering blindly to a ruined cause, irritate them as is now being done". The Trade Report advised that "the injury the Taipings can inflict upon us should make it our policy to conciliate them".(2)

Over the last two years of the rebellion it was steadily critical of what it called "the impotent interference of the British", attacking the thirty mile radius plan and the Lay-Osborn flotilla especially, and by the middle of 1863

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(1) ibid Feb.14, March 13, 31, July 27, 1861.

(2) ibid Feb. 28, 1862 (as cit. by Times of India March 21,1862)

it was even taking a far more favourable view of the rebels than formerly.

> "The silk producing districts are and have been for the last three years in the undisputed possession of the insurgents", it observed in June, 1863, "through whose hands the trade in this article has been conducted in a manner which has inspired the utmost confidence in the minds of the Foreign mercantile community, whose sympathies they have almost universally secured by their courtesy and spirit of fair dealing. Foreigners visiting the Silk producing districts attest that prosperity and contentment are there the order of the day."

It was not the merchant body, but the British diplomatic, naval and military authorities who were most in favour of supporting the Imperialist cause, this article concluded, and they had foisted their views upon the home government "by a vast amount of misrepresentation".(1)

The views presented in the Overland Trade Report are parallelled in many respects in the Jardine, Matheson correspondence for these years. In this also is found, during 1861, hostility to the rebels together with condemnation of "the half measures of our government" which were exerting

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(1) ibid.June 12,1863; cf also Nov.14,1863, April 14,28 and May 29, 1864.

"a very prejudicial effect on our commercial interests".(1)
In June, 1862, the then Hong Kong head of the firm, Alexander Perceval, told a correspondent in India,

> "I do not think we should interfere in this struggle without the assistance of at least 10,000 men, and if (the) Government are not prepared to undertake the matter properly, it would be much better to come to terms with the de facto rulers near Shanghai. These troubles are interfering seriously with our import trade and no doubt tend to raise prices considerably".(2)

The firm also wrote in condemnation of government policy to its business correspondents in England in July, 1862, calling their attention to the fact that since the aggressive measures taken against the rebels in the course of the first campaign to clear a radius around Shanghai had ceased,

> "the market for Imports in that quarter has assumed a much healthier appearance..... We firmly believe", they went on, "that the long period of stagnation to which the Import trade at Shanghae has been subjected

(1) J.M.&Co., Europe Letter Book, vol.40 (1861-2) p122, to Matheson & Co., May 1, 1861; also p87, April 15, 1861 - "The opinion is becoming almost universal here that the Taiping Insurgents are merely a destructive scourge and that no possible benefit either to the empire itself or to foreign relations with China can attend a continuance of their successes. Their presence will materially check the development of trade up the river, and in all probability the immediate results will be but small and gradual". Cf below for later, more pro-rebel views.

For fn.(2) see bottom of next page...

"would have been avoided if the policy of strict neutrality had been persisted in on our part, and it is therefore devoutly to be wished that the large reinforcements of Troops, which, it is reported, have been asked from the Home Government in order to subdue the rebellion may not be granted, as we are convinced that both the Import and Export Trade in China cannot fail to be seriously prejudiced by a renewal of hostilities...."(1)

The interests of British trade in China demanded neutrality, not intervention.

A more favourable view of the rebels was also taken as it was found that, despite their encirclement of Shanghai, they offered "no serious impediment to the passage of Silk".(2)

"We attach little credit to the stories of the atrocities committed by these people, and believe they have been

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(2) from previous page... ibid., Private Letter Book (1860-3) to C.H.Brown June 12, 1862; cf. also ibid to J.A.Baumbach June 10, 1862, and Sept.10,1862 - "The allies as usual have occasional brushes with the Rebels around Shanghae, which must be looked for until we either take active measures to put down the movement or endeavour to make terms with them. The latter in my opinion would be our best and wisest course to adopt".

(1) this page... ibid. Europe Letter Book, vol.41 (1861-2) p 293-5, to S.Mendel (Manchester) and others.

(2) ibid. p 256, to Matheson & Co., June 27,1862.

"propagated for a purpose", they told Matheson & Co. of London, "the Imperialists being the real oppressors of the people and devastators of the country".(1)

The departure of Rear Admiral Hope, who was regarded as the chief architect of the policy of intervention, was greeted with the wish that "the aggressive policy of our authorities will be considerably modified"; Bruce was condemned as "imperious and inaccessible", and as not exerting "any salutary influence whatever" in Peking; while it was hoped that the failure of the Lay-Osborn scheme would make ministers in England "come fully alive to the folly of the course they have been pursuing".(2) Jardine, Matheson & Co., the greatest of the opium trading firms in China - and it is worth emphasising here that I have found no suggestion of hostility towards the rebels on account of their supposed prohibition of opium smoking in the correspondence of this firm - certainly cannot be counted as among the supporters of the official policy of intefvention against the Taipings. They were, in fact, pro-rebel if anything by 1862-3.

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(1) ibid. p 283, to Matheson & Co. July 12, 1862.

(2) see ibid. pp 209, 366, 471 and vol 42 (1863-4) p 496

Such merchant opposition to the official policy as that represented by the Overland Trade Report and by the Jardine, Matheson correspondence was essentially opposition to the kind of intervention actually undertaken by the British authorities in China after 1862. More than the "half and half" character of British intervention was behind this kind of opposition. At the end of 1862 a paper published by Jardine, Matheson & Co. called the Shanghai Recorder criticised the revised regulations for trade on the Yangtze which restricted British vessels strictly to the ports named in the Treaty of Tientsin, and called for what the China Mail summarised as,

> "A return to the old state of affairs which existed before the Treaties were framed for the regulation of trade.....a right to trade at any part of the coast whatever, and settle terms as to import duties with the local mandarins".(1)

Bruce, commenting on this point of view in a despatch to Russell at the beginning of 1863, pointed out that

> "if the Chinese Executive were to continue in its former condition, the proposed policy would be favourable to the interests of the large houses in China, for their

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(1) cit. A & P 1864 (3295) pp 44-5. The B.M. has no file of the Shanghai Recorder, nor is there one in the J.M.archive at Cambridge.

"command of capital would give them a decided advantage, and they would conduct their trading operations in expensive vessels, heavily armed, which would over-awe opposition. But this monopoly would not be beneficial to the manufacturing interests of Great Britain, and the calculations of its promoters will be defeated if the Chinese are in possession of a naval force."(1)

Large trading firms established on the China coast, such as Jardine, Matheson & Co., were not averse to the continuance of weak government in China, since this increased the chances of extending trade beyond the limits set by treaty. But chances of doing this would vanish if Bruce's policy of conciliating, strengthening and reforming the central government in Peking succeeded, and that government acquired both an efficient customs service and a modern navy - two features of British aid to the Manchus which, in the shape of the Foreign Inspectorate of the Customs and the Lay-Osborn flotilla, were especially attached by both the Overland Trade Report and Jardine, Matheson & Co. The opposition of such groups to the policy of limited, would-be-reforming aid to the Manchu government was, in part, opposition to the whole Bruce programme of a strengthened central government in China.(2)

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(1) ibid p.43
(2) Note the President of the Hong Kong C. of C. in Oct.1862, (Perceval?) as cit. in P.D. vol 174 (1864) col.1517 - "The great majority of the respectable commercial classes

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Views more sympathetic to the government policy were, however, certainly to be found among British merchants in China. In March, 1861, the report of a deputation of merchants representing the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, which had accompanied Hope on his first expedition up the Yangtze, was presented. This was quickly published, and called by the Times, "in a commercial point of view the most interesting and important document that has appeared in our age".(1) The report reviewed the commercial possibilities of the places visited by Hope's expedition. Although hopeful of such cities as Hankow, so long as they remained in Imperial hands, the deputation saw no prospects of trade with centres under rebel control. Of Nanking they stated,

"There seems no prospect for the development of commerce with this city, or the districts controlled by it, while

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continuing (2) from previous page.....
(foreign) in this country strongly disapprove of the present action of our authorities; and many persons, even who at an earlier period gave all their influence in opposition to the maintenance of neutrality, have seen reason materially to modify their opinion. The commercial body, for the most part, have no faith whatever in the regeneration of China by such foreign aid as is now afforded, nor do they believe that hearty co-operation in introducing the foreign element in the various branches of the Chinese public service can be expected from any native officials beyond, perhaps, the few men at Peking within the personal influence of the foreign ministers..." Cf Michie below p284

(1) this page... The Times, May 30, 1861.

"under its present rulers. The people are enslaved. The soldiery unpaid, but habituated to plunder, are little likely to engage in any industrial pursuits. The rulers, so far from being able to govern the country, do not even admit within the walls of their capital the shopkeepers necessary for the supply of the daily wants of the residents. The proclamations which occasionally appear, apparently designed to encourage trade, must be read with regard to this state of affairs. Their design can at present extend no further than to bring in provisions at cheaper rates, or supply a market for the soldiery, which, commercially speaking, can only be on a very small scale. It remains to be seen how far these evils can be mitigated by foreign influence".

Their report concluded by expressing the "strong opinion that this movement can in no just sense be considered political, still less patriotic or constructive," and also the fear that the advantages reasonably to be expected from the opening of the Yangtze to foreign trade "may be counteracted by the anarchy and disorganization which entail such dire evils on all classes of society in the Chinese Empire". (1)

(1) See A & P 1861 (2840) pp 11-16 esp.p.12; cf also A & P 1862 (2976) pp 7-9.

Although an implication in favour of action against the rebellion can be read into this report, there was in it no definite statement of opinion about the best government policy in the circumstances. As evidence already quoted sufficiently illustrates, condemnation of the rebellion cannot be taken as synonymous with support for a policy of active intervention against it. But at least one of the members of this deputation, Alexander Michie, became a strong supporter of a policy of intervention, so much so that he was more than once quoted in debates in the House of Commons as illustrating merchant support for such a policy. In July, 1862, for example, the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Layard, quoted him as writing,

> "This conflict has been dragging on for over twelve years, with no result but the devastation of the country and the ruin of trade. Our interests demand that one of the parties be destroyed, and as the Imperialists have at least the traditions of a Government, there is more hope of their reviving than of any of the insurgent parties coming to anything".(1)

(1) cit. P.D. vol 168 (1862) cols.61-2; the London & China Express May 10,1864, p378, commented of a later letter of Michie's which was also quoted in the H.of C., that his experience and judgment "eminently mark him as the representative of British merchants in communicating with the Government". It is quite certain, though, that many would not have chosen him as their spokesman on policy towards the rebellion.

Michie's business partner in England, H. H. Lindsay, forwarded to the Foreign Office copies of several of his letters and himself echoed Michie's suggestion that Nanking be taken and an amnesty declared under English and French guarantees.(1) Michie, in fact, rather regretted that the emergency in China had not occurred a hundred years earlier, for then "an easy solution would have been found and China would have become the richest possession of the British Crown. Now such a thing is not to be thought of". But he urged that China should at any rate be "colonised" as rapidly as possible, by which he meant that capital investments should be made to develop roads, railways, telegraph, mines and "in short introduce machinery.... In ten years" Michie added, "China would be as rich and prosperous as it ought to be - and as for the Rebels we should give them no room and they would die out - they could not stand railways". It was a couple of decades too early for the British government to respond to that kind of investment imperialism, and Michie's plans for transforming China wholesale in a short time were dismissed by Russell and Palmerston as "somewhat wild" and "quite impracticable".(2)

(1) F.O.17/381 H.H.Lindsay to F.O.April 30,1862, enc. Michie to Lindsay March 7, 1862; also F.O.17/380 R.C.Antrobus to the F.O. Feb. 23, 1862.

(2) F.O.17/383 Michie to Lindsay July 30, 1862, with comments by Russell & Palmerston dated Oct.4 and 7.

As a spokesman for merchant opinion about government policy towards the rebels, however, Michie was listened to with more respect. Towards the end of 1862 Michie visited England and gave the following reply to queries put to him by Layard about the attitude of the merchants in China to government policy.

> "The British merchants most largely connected with China", Michie wrote, "are in favour of the British Government giving such assistance to the Chinese Government as will enable them to keep the Taepings out of the treaty ports; nor do I think there is any difference of opinion as to the advisability of pushing our assistance to the ultimate crushing of the rebellion. The modus operandi may have been questioned, and I know some merchants have considered the Government might with advantage have gone a step further than it has done. But all feel and acknowledge the delicacy of the position.... The great majority, however, have been in favour of the plan pursued as being the most economical to this country and the soundest in policy, not compromising the British Government more than necessary and teaching the Chinese to help themselves....."

Layard quoted these views in the Commons as providing "remarkable and complete testimony" of the success of the government

policy, and of its approval by British merchants in China.[1] But although Michie may have been right in his claim that "the great majority" supported the policy, the evidence already quoted shows that there was a significant body of merchant opinion in China hostile to that policy, especially as it developed after 1862.

In England also a division of opinion, both about whether the policy of intefvention would really serve British commercial interests in China and about whether the merchants themselves approved it, revealed itself. The latter point emerged especially as a result of a debate in the House of Commons in July, 1863. In this Lord Naas roundly attacked the policy of intervention, and claimed that many merchants looked upon it with alarm.

> "I have had an opportunity of consulting many London commercial houses engaged in trade with China, "Lord Naas stated, "and I find that they are almost to a man opposed to Capt. Sherard Osborn's expedition, and against an interference, calculated, as they believe, to damage the commercial interests of England".

Later in the debate Samuel Gregson, who was chairman of a trade organisation known as the East India and China

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(1) cit. P.D.vol 174 (1864) cols. 1536-9.

Association,[1] replied that "our merchants were perfectly satisfied in the policy pursued by Her Majesty's Government, and we were never in a better position than at present in respect of China".[2] Lord Naas took up the question further in a letter to the Times in which he gave the source of his information about merchant feeling on the question as Mr. J. Dent, of Dent & Co., and Mr. Walkinshaw, of Turner & Co., who had called upon him and informed him that he was "at liberty to state, on their authority, that the China merchants as a body were opposed to the new policy of the Government". A week later Walkinshaw, writing from Glasgow, supported Lord Naas and contradicted Gregson's claim with the assertion that merchants in China were

> "almost to a man dissatisfied with the policy that authorizes British officers and men to carry arms in the employ of the Chinese Government; they consider such policy to be fraught with the most dangerous consequences, and one far more likely to prejudice than benefit the trade between the countries....."

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(1) I have been unable to trace any surviving records of this Association, in Liverpool or London. It had a representative on the Council of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce from 1853 to 1875, though it was in existence at least as early as 1847. (see Manchester C. of C. Prcs. vol.1839-49, p695, 721). The Secretary of the Chamber, Lt.Col.P.G.R.Burford, informed me (Nov.1955) that such files as they had covering that period "went to salvage during the Second World War".

(2) see P.D.vol 172(1863) cols.296, 329.

The defence of the treaty ports, but beyond that non-interference between the Manchu government and the rebels was, Walkinshaw added, the policy wanted by the mercantile community in China. Gregson replied, referring in general terms to his conversations with "several gentlemen largely engaged in trade with China and some of them recently returned home", but without naming names. On the whole the honours of the exchange would seem to have gone to Lord Naas.(1)

The Gregson point of view on government policy certainly had its supporters, however, notably the London and China Express. This was a fortnightly paper founded at the end of 1858, devoted to the extension of commercial openings in the Far East and looking, as the Prospectus in its first issue stated, "specially for the support of the Mercantile Community".(2) During 1861 the Express favoured a policy of keeping on good terms with both Taipings and Imperialists

(1) See the Times July 13,1863, p.6; July 20,p.12 and July 22, p.6. Walkinshaw was Vice-Chairman of the Hong Kong C. of C. in 1861 (Overland China Mail June 28,1861); Gregson was chairman of the East India and China Association, though himself an Indian rather than a China trader. On the attitude of Dent & Co. cf A.F.Lindley, op.cit., vol II,p561 Lindley says that the failure of that firm to establish an opium trade with the rebels at Wuhu made them "become their most signal revilers, and use all the interest they possessed against them". This is not supported by Dent's visit to Lord Naas. Of their trade at Wuhu, Wyndham, attaché to the Mission at Peking, reported after a journey up the Yangtze, that they were doing "a considerable trade, or rather a lucrative trade, for the rebels pay largely". (F.O.17/372 enc. in Bruce to Russell June 10,1862).

See bottom of next page for fn.(2)...

if possible, though without putting any faith in the rebel movement.(1) By January, 1862, even before the second Taiping attack on Shanghai, it was arguing that there was "no reason why we should seek to avoid any legitimate opportunity which may offer of interfering in favour of the cause of order in China". It naturally greeted the change in official policy with approval, seeing it as one of outright war against the rebellion, and it was convinced that England "must either act against the Taipings with the full conviction that force is the only logic they are capable of appreciating, or we must give up all the privileges we now enjoy".(2) During 1863 it saw, at first with some apprehension but eventually as an unavoidable development, the emergence of a British Protectorate in China, and although giving fairly consistent support to the policy of intervention as followed by the government would, if anything, have preferred it to have been more frankly expansionist.(3) On the question of merchant opinion about that policy the Express admitted some opposition,

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(2) from previous page.. The China Express Nov.25,1858. It changed its title to the London & China Express at the end of 1861. It was published to catch departing mails for the Far East, while a companion paper, carrying much the same editorial comments etc., the London & ChinaTelegraph, was published on the arrival of mails from the Far East. I have used the Express, since it carried a column called "The Spirit of the Press" which quoted the views of other English (inc. provincial) papers on China affairs.

(1) this page.... ibid May 27, June 10,1861 etc.

(2) ibid Jan.10, March 26, Aug. 26, Sept. 10, 1862

(3) ibid Jan.10, Feb.10, April 10, May 26, Nov. 26, 1863.

but argued that this was more over methods than principle.(1)

Much more qualified support for the government's policy came from the Economist. Writing in March, 1862, of the change towards a more aggressive line towards the rebellion it agreed that it was necessary to protect "the newly blossoming commercial interest" in China, but was alarmed lest England

> "be led almost insensibly and inevitably to a policy in China such as initiated our Empire in India.... We are inclined to agree in the policy now decided on, but we do so with fear and trembling. We should wish our Government to weigh well the great fear of involving ourselves inextricably in the internal government of China. We would wish them to shape their policy with an anxious view to avoid the risk of contracting such responsibilities, to intervene as little as in any way possible, to draw out again at the first feasible moment, to make it a primary duty not to let our power creep on into the foundation of a new dependency".(2)

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(1) ibid July 27, 1863. In this issue the Express was, however, critical of the Lay-Osborn scheme, which it thought "fraught with great mischief to trade, and will ultimately lead to a collision, not only with the Chinese Government, but also with other foreign powers".

(2) Economist March 22, 1862; cf. also Oct. 20, 1860, article on "The Drift of our Chinese Policy".

The chief fear of the Economist was not in the direct use of small British forces against the Taipings but in the release of officers and officials to serve the Chinese government, a type of assistance which would make it virtually impossible to disengage from responsibility for Chinese affairs.(1) It was impossible to remain absolutely neutral, but "there should be a minimum of interference" it urged.(2)

Outright rejection of a policy of intervention came from some of Jardine, Matheson's Manchester correspondents, in reply to that firm's strictures on the government policy in the middle of 1862. Sam Mendel, writing in September, stated that he had "all along thought that strict neutrality would have proved far more judicious", while at the end of the year Calvert & Co. agreed that it was "most unfortunate for the extension of trade with the Chinese that a policy of strict neutrality with regard to the Taipings was not persevered in by the Allied authorities". Other reactions to the Jardine, Matheson complaints were, of course, also to be found. William Paton of Glasgow felt the subject to be one of great difficulty and put his trust in "the present

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(1) ibid. July 12, Aug. 2, Oct.3 and 31, 1863.

(2) ibid. June 4, 1864.

excellent and able statesman at the head of Foreign Affairs in Great Britain, Earl Russell", whom he thought had every disposition to remain neutral, "were it possible consistently with the safety of British interests".(1) Matheson & Co., although glad to learn "that the Taipings seem disposed to afford every protection and encouragement to foreigners and their trade", were far more concerned with the development of events in America, and expressed no particular views about policy in China.(2) This is a warning against exaggerating the degree of concern in British merchant houses over the Taiping issue in China.

Very appropriately, the division of merchant opinion in England on the question of policy towards the rebellion was revealed most plainly in the House of Commons. There were several debates on the issue there, as well as in the Lords, and on July 8, 1862, a vote was taken on a resolution calling for British officials in China to be directed "to avoid any intervention beyond that absolutely necessary for the defence of those British subjects who abstain from all interference in the Civil War now raging in that country".(3) This was

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(1) J.M.&Co. Correspondence In - Great Britain (Box 1862-3) Sept. 25,1862 (from Mendel and Paton), Dec.27,1862 (from Calvert).

(2) ibid., Correspondence In - London (Box 1862) Sept.8, 1862. Matheson & Co generally just acknowledged any political news or observations without commenting - seeibid June 24, July 24, Aug.8,1862 and Feb.8,1864, June 24,1861 etc.

(3) For this debate see P.D.vol.168 (1862) cols.29-81; for other debates see below, ch. 10.

defeated by a large majority (197 to 88), but it is to be noted that the resolution was moved by James White, who had been for many years a merchant in China and who was described in Walford's Shilling House of Commons for 1862 as being then "a China merchant in the City". He criticised Russell's recent instruction that all the treaty ports should be defended against the rebels on the ground that this was a potentially "stupendous task", and rejected the government argument that it was all for the protection of trade by pointing out that tea and silk exports from China were still increasing, including the particular types of silk produced in the rebel held areas. White was supported in this vote by a number of other merchants and manufacturers, as also, of course, was the government. But the weight of merchant opinion in the House, insofar as it was expressed in the division list, was fairly evenly divided. Of about forty members listed in the Shilling House of Commons for 1862 as being either merchants or former merchants, twenty three voted on this issue, fourteen for the government and nine against; and of twelve listed as manufacturers, seven voted, three for the government and four against.(1) There

(1) These figures were obtained by checking the division list of the vote of July 8,1862, against the information about members contained in Walford's Shilling H. of C.(1862). They are not presented as giving an accurate indication of merchant and manufacturing representation in the H. of C. at that time (the information in the Shilling H. of C. is very sketchy), but as providing some kind of statistical evidence of the division which existed among such representatives on this issue. The government was, in fact, persistently attacked by merchants in the H. of C. from 1862-64 for its policy towards the rebellion, and its claim that it was acting for the benefit of trade only served to irritate some of them the more.

was certainly no unanimous cry from trading and manufacturing representatives in Parliament for the British government to take active measures against the Taiping rebels.

In a later debate, in 1864, after W. E. Baxter, a Dundee merchant who did not vote in the 1862 division, had also attacked the policy of co-operating with what he called the "cruel and corrupt government of the Mantchou Tartars", Palmerston complained of "the inconsistency of these mercantile gentlemen", who were constantly urging the government to make treaties and extend commercial opportunities yet were reluctant to accept the necessity for action to maintain those treaties. "We have interfered with great success in the affairs of other countries, and with great benefit to the countries concerned", Palmerston claimed, listing Greece, Belgium, Portugal, Turkey and Egypt as examples. To these he was ready to add China.(1)

(1) For this debate see P.D.vol 175 (1864) cols.527-45; note also Thos. H. Horsfall, M.P. for Liverpool and a former President of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce at half-yearly General Meeting of the Chamber in Aug.1864 - "With regard to the war in China, Lord Palmerston stated, I think to some extent erroneously, that that war was carried on for the protection of the commercial interests of the country. That war was to a certain extent carried on for the protection of the commercial interests so far as this, that notice had been given that British interests would be protected for 30 miles around the various treaty ports. Had the war been confined to these 30 miles, I am satisfied it would have been a comparatively unimportant war; but it was because Major Gordon, acting I believe with the concurrence of the Government, went beyond that circle that the great difficulty arose". (Liverpool C. of C. Reports, Aug,1864, p.35).

His aristocratic government certainly did not feel it necessary to wait upon the approval of middle class merchants before interfering in what it conceived to be the true commercial interests of England,[1] especially when those merchants spoke with a divided voice, as they clearly did on the question of helping to suppress the Taiping rebellion.

One naturally asks whether this division of merchant opinion reflected any division of merchant interests. It is not obvious that it did so. The lines of division suggested at the time were that it was the opium traders who were the great opponents of the rebels and advocates of their destruction, and that it was the merchants engaged in arms running on the China coast who were the chief opponents of any policy designed to end the rebellion.[2] The first of these simply

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(1) On the aristocratic composition of Palmerston's government note E. L. Woodward, The Age of Reform (1938) pp 155,166, 641. Palmerston's cabinet at this time included "three dukes and the brother of a fourth, five peers and sons of peers, three baronets of ancient standing and landed property, and only three men without titles".

(2) For the argument that the opium merchants were the chief instigators of government policy see A.F.Lindley, op.cit., Vol.I pp 55-6, 209-10 and vol II p561, and W.H.Sykes The Taeping Rebellion in China (1863) pp ii-iii and 30; for the gunrunners as its chief opponents (one wonders whether they were not the same merchants!) see A & P 1862 (2976) p 154 and 1863 (3104) pp 76-7.

does not stand up against the evidence of the Jardine, Matheson correspondence, which is capped by the letter of Lord Naas to the Times naming Mr. J. Dent of Dent and Co. as being opposed to the government policy of intervention. The second seems obviously inadequate to explain the extent of publicly expressed merchant opposition, especially in England. The British government thought of itself as acting particularly to secure a good market in China for the home manufacturer, but the evidence of the 1862 division list indicates that not all those manufacturers appreciated its objectives. The only sure conclusion about British merchant opinion on this question seems to be that it was distinctly divided, not primarily over the merits or demerits of the Taiping rebels, but over the necessity for and the desirability of action by the British government against th em.

CHAPTER IX

BRITISH MISSIONARY OPINION

The missionaries have had a very bad press for their attitude towards the Taipings. They have been criticised by writers hostile to the rebellion for ever being deluded by it, and by writers favourable to the rebellion for ever forsaking it.

> "The Protestant missionaries then in China were elated by the outbreak of the great Rebellion", wrote Alexander Michie, in 1892. ".....For eight years and perhaps longer (they) continued to be partisans of the Rebels..... The tide eventually turned, and in view of the decidedly polygamous proclivities of the Wang himself, and some rather serious aberrations in doctrine, the missionaries gradually withdrew their sympathy, washed their hands of the new Christians ....and passed by on the other side". (1)

In their "ignorant fervour" on behalf of the rebels, wrote D.C. Boulger, the missionaries "strained all their influence

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(1) Alexander Michie, China and Christianity, (1892) p.43.

to commit our Government to the adventure of espousing these spurious Christians", while G. J. Wolseley judged it not surprising that "in their joy at so much apparent spiritual good, they should lose sight of the great evils attendant thereon".(1)

On the other hand, A. F. Lindley criticised the missionaries for their "negligence" of the rebellion,(2) while Holger Cahill felt that although the opposition of the British merchants and consular officials to the rebellion was understandable, that of the missionaries was not.

> "the missionaries quarrelled with the Taipings for reasons which had to do with their own sectarian and national rivalries rather than with any passion for Christianity", he wrote. ".....Each sect demanded that the religion of the rebels be of its own exact type..... The missionaries did not understand the Taiping movement.....(they) failed in any constructive action in the Taiping rebellion".(3)

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(1) D. C. Boulger, The Life of Halliday Macartney (1908) pp41-2 and G. J. Wolseley, Narrative of the War in China in 1860 (1862) p.333.

(2) A. F. Lindley, op. cit., vol I pp 309-10.

(3) H. Cahill, op.cit., p 287; see also C.P.Fitzgerald, China (1950 edn) pp 574-81.

Deluded or disillusioned, in support of the rebellion or in opposition to it, the role of the missionaries has been very generally criticised. This chapter attempts an overall survey of the reaction of British Protestant missionaries towards the Taiping rebellion, as far as possible letting them speak for themselves. Some of the charges made against them clearly have much force; others are no less clearly unjustified.

The situation of the Protestant missionaries in China in the years immediately following the Treaty of Nanking was certainly such as to make them elated at news of a native Christian rebellion. The opening of the first five ports under that treaty had seemed to promise a great new field for enterprise and expansion to the missionary, as it had to the merchant. Sir Henry Pottinger's picture of the wide prospects for trade in China was matched by the Rev. Dr. Liefchild at a public meeting of the friends of the London Missionary Society in January 1843.

> "When Christianity once gets into China, and the inhabitants of that empire are able to compare the statutes of Confucius and Buddhu (sic) and all the puerilities mixed in them with the Christian scriptures universally diffuse d in their own language and eagerly perused by that inquisitive and reading people, think you not that the objects

"of their idolatrous worship will soon begin to totter and tumble and fall, and be entombed in the very soil out of which they arose? When they shall come to see the superiority of our knowledge and civilization..... can you doubt that their puerile conceits will crumble and vanish?"(1)

The missionaries actually in the field were rather more alive to possible dragons in their path, but for them, too, it seemed that "the acceptable year of the Lord, the set time to favour the land of Sinim" was at hand. The Rev. W. H. Medhurst, father of the consular official, wrote from Shanghai rejoicing in "the animating fact of the accessibility of China to missionary labours", though he added that "as propagators of a new religion in cities but recently opened to foreign intercourse we are somewhat delicately situated.... it would appear to be the dictate of prudence to conduct our

(1) Missionary Magazine, 1843, p.20. The Rev. Dr. continued, "When our women - the glory of our land and the charm of every circle, whose superiority is acknowledged in every country under heaven...shall mingle with them in the person of the wives of Missionaries, or the consorts of noble and illustrious visitors to the palace, how will the female portion of the Chinese population rise in everything graceful and dignified by such an association. The Chinese ladies, in a very few years, will be copying the manners of English women....How wondrous are the ways of Providence, how mysterious to our apprehension, that this little nation - this handful of people- should be the means of saving, by her civil, moral, intellectural and spiritual condition, the teeming and swarming population of the globe!".

operations with as much caution and stillness as possible". Dr. Lockhart urged that more missionaries be sent out, "for it is a pity to lose any time when so effectual a door is thrown open before us in this land".(1)

In 1843 the undenominational London Missionary Society was the only English society actively in the China field, with eight representatives in a total Protestant missionary force in China of about twenty five, most of the remainder being American. After the signing of the Treaty of Nanking there was a considerable expansion of Protestant missionary organization in China. By 1848 the London Missionary Society had doubled its numbers, the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England had renewed the efforts it had abandoned in 1840, Baptist and Presbyterian Missionary societies had sent out their first representatives, and the number of British missionaries alone had reached twenty-five, in a total Protestant force of seventy-three, of whom over forty were American. Five years later again, however, by which time the Taipings were establishing themselves at Nanking, the number of British missionaries had increased only to twenty-nine, and the total to eighty-one. There had been significant falling away of impetus, indicative of the check

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(1) ibid, 1843, p.180 and 1844, p.148.

to missionary hopes under the first treaty with China.[1]

The fact was that the missionary, like the merchant, found China a difficult field to penetrate effectively. He did not doubt the ultimate triumph of his message, any more than the merchant doubted the ultimate worth of his gospel of free trade, but in both cases the early returns were disappointing. "I have laboured in China for seven years", said the Presbyterian, William Burns, in 1853, "and I do not know of a single soul brought to Christ by me".[2] After nine years of labour by several London Missionary Society missionaries at Shanghai, the Rev. W. C. Milne felt "not a little gratified that we can speak of a native church of twenty one members....Though our success is limited, very limited in amount, yet we rejoice".[3] In a despatch to Palmerston about this time Bowring contrasted the position of the Roman Catholic and Protestant missions in China, and observed of the latter that "the results of their preaching and of their labours for the conversion of the natives are

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(1) For sources of these and later figures on British missionaries in China see Appendix D. Catholic missions in China at this time were mainly conducted by the French.

(2) cit. D.McGillivray, A Century of Protestant Missions in China (1907), p.175.

(3) Missionary Magazine, 1853, p.29; cf. also J.Kesson, The Cross and the Dragon (1854) pp 232-8.

incredibly small, considering the large sums of money which have been spent upon the missions, the number of protestant missionaries, and their undoubted devotion to the work they have undertaken".(1)

This lack of success was variously explained, Bowring's comment being that "indifference, not fanaticism, is the difficulty with which they have to deal". The special degradation and corruption held by many to be characteristic of the Chinese, was, of course, a favourite reason given, the Church Missionary Intelligencer, for example, exclaiming - "Alas! There is nothing but moral decay in China. From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness, and whatever of actual vice and corruption can originate is to be found there. What need of the Gospel in China! .... Despised and scorned it will be; but who can doubt the issue?"(2) More moderately, the London Missionary Magazine argued that

> "in a country where the prevailing systems of belief, and the social usages of the entire population have been stereotyped for ages, the attempt to introduce ideas at variance with every preconceived notion must necessarily be a work of great difficulty. Hence it can be no matter for surprise that the indefatigable

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(1) F.O.17/189 Bowring to Clarendon May 1, 1852.
(2) Church Missionary Intelligencer, 1850, p466.

"labours of our Missionaries in China, though followed by many tokens of encouragement, have hitherto made little or no impression upon the masses of the people". (1)

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(1) Missionary Magazine, 1852, p.170; cf. also Rev. W.A.Russell in July, 1848 - "A teeming population with much intelligence and, to my mind an extraordinary degree of outward sobriety and general good conduct, would all seem to encourage the hope that this was just the field for Missionary enterprise; but on the other hand, when you hear of the faithful proclamation of Gospel truth unattended with visible fruit you are constrainedly diverted from the comparison of outward favourable symptoms to the conviction that not here or there, as man conceives, is the good ground where the seed of the word will spring up, but only where the Lord chooses to bless. That he will choose to bless this numerous people in His own good time I doubt not .... But that there is yet a stirring among the "dry bones" I do not think, at least to any extent.... " (Church Missionary Record, 1848, p.292). For other moderate views on the moral condition of the Chinese see W. Gillespie, The Land of Sinim (1854) pp 120-2, who concluded that they had "probably gone as far as any heathen people could go in the acquisition of correct manners and the practice of good morals, without a revelation from heaven to guide them". But wholesale missionary condemnation of Chinese morality was very common, and probably the more usual attitude.

Indeed, the whole Chinese approach to religion, based on expediency rather than on faith, and accommodating in temper rather than narrowly exclusivist, was very far removed from the fervour of nineteenth century evangelical Protestantism, so that, in rational terms at least, the limited appeal of the missionaries' message was hardly surprising.(1) In addition, at Canton and Foochow especially, there were political difficulties to contend with, although on the whole the missionaries complained much less than the merchants of official obstruction.(2) But despite their disappointments,

(1) See Missionary Magazine, 1862, p.12, for the complaints of Rev. J. MacGowan on "the apathy with which the Chinese regard the future life", and "their very imperfect idea... in regard to sin. In fact very few are willing to admit that they have any sin at all, and therefore when the Gospel is preached, denouncing man as the subject of corruption, it clashes with all their preconceived ideas, and brings in a doctrine which is almost wholly new to them"; also ibid, 1864, pp3-4, "When the Gospel is preached to them a primary consideration with them is what are the advantages connected with it". In his Charge to the Anglican Clergy, March 16, 1860, pp9-10, the Bishop of Victoria noted the less favourable position of the missionary in a country such as China, which had its established literature and civilisation (which the missionary did not do wisely to disdain), compared with more primitive countries where the missionary might establish his influence by bringing other benefits in addition to religion.

(2) See A & P 1847 (654) qq2902-3, where Rev. G. Smith (later Bishop of Victoria) told the Select Committee on Commercial Relations in China that "not the slightest" obstruction from the native government or priesthood had been met with. There were some complaints and difficulties, however, (e.g. C.M.Intelligencer 1851, pp87-9).

having faith, they did not despair; they simply deferred their hopes.(1)

Being human, though, the missionaries looked for a sign, and it is not surprising that they greeted news of a native Chinese movement of reform which proclaimed a Christian ideology with great joy and optimism. Yet it was a joy and optimism tempered from the very beginning with a considerable element of caution, and even of doubt. A mixture of caution and hopefulness, even if not always in very equal parts, is apparent in the great majority of their early reports, beginning with Medhurst's summing up of Taiping Christianity on the basis of the pamphlets he collected at Nanking when accompanying Bonham on his visit of April, 1853. On the Christian worth of these productions Medhurst found it "exceedingly difficult to arrive at a definite conclusion. There are some things good, very good, in the productions before us..... There are, however, some things of which we most highly disapprove....."(2) On the day following the return of the "Hermes" from Nanking, the Rev. W. C. Milne reported that the London Missionary Society missionaries in Shanghai

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(1) To some extent these were encouraged by early reports on the rebellion in Kwangsi - see Church Missionary Record Nov.1852, pp262-3; but cf. above pp. 20-1 for pre-1853 missionary reactions to the rebellion.

(2) A & P 1852-3 (1667) p.43.

"wish it distinctly to be observed that at present we refrain from expressing an opinion as to the sincerity of any of this people in what they hold of Christianity; and we particularly request the Board that, should they issue any account of the above, they will give the whole - coupled with a caution not to look at the fair side of the picture only, nor be carried away by those semblances of <u>good</u> that perhaps are after all hollow and false, while they are mixed up with much that is undoubtedly presumptuous and criminal".(1)

The Rev. J. Hobson, in forwarding Medhurst's translations of the Taiping pamphlets to the Church Missionary Society, observed that "while on the one hand they will grieve you by showing marks of rampant pride and ambition in the leaders of the rebellion, and worse than these a systematic attempt to wrest Christian truth to serve mere political purposes, on the other hand you will rejoice to see these men in possession of so much Christian truth....."(2) The emphasis

(1) LMS Central China Letters (Box I,4 No.25) Milne to Tidman (Secretary of LMS), May 6,1853; also <u>Missionary Magazine</u>, 1853, pp 205-6.

(2) CMS China Letters, Hobson to Venn (Secretary of CMS), May 31,1853; cf also Bishop of Victoria to Archbishop of Canterbury, May 23,1853, in <u>C.M.Intelligencer</u>,1853,pp.193-4 - "There is, of course, much in these imperfectly enlightened men which may lead into fanatical excesses; and we must use great caution lest we crudely identify Protestant Missions with a movement of which the whole character has not as yet been fully developed....Yet some sympathy may surely be

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varied, but the early missionary reports on the rebellion did emphasize both the hopeful and the less hopeful features of the movement, as seen from the missionary viewpoint.

On the basis of such reports the home societies in England warned their supporters against excessive optimism. The Committee of the Church Missionary Society, while noting the enthusiasm of many Christians for the movement, could not itself go beyond the expression of "hopeful but anxious expectations". It saw many tokens of the good hand of the Lord in this development in China, but was anxious lest "the evils which now hover above the movement should settle upon it - of religious fanaticism, or of reactionary vengeance, or of destructive socialism....."(1) The London Missionary Society, in publishing its first reports on the movement in September, 1853, warned that "our Missionaries are extremely desirous that the English public should not be induced, by the avowed adoption of the Christian faith by the insurgents, to draw inferences which subsequent events may fail to justify, more especially as the better element that characterizes the movement is evidently mixed up with much that is heterogenous and immoral". At the end of the year the warning was

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(1) Procs. of the C.M.S., 1853-4, p.140.

Concluding fn.(2) from previous page..
"felt with the population of a vast continent now awaking from the long slumber of ages, and at last, it is to be hoped, about to enter into the great fraternity of civilized and Christian nations".

repeated that Taiping religious development was "very partial and imperfect", and it was "doubted whether the chiefs and teachers of the Chinese Insurgents can even be regarded as almost Christians". (1) Both in China and England early missionary reaction to the rebellion was far from unguarded in its optimism. (2)

This is not to deny that hope mounted far higher in missionary circles than did doubt, or that an immense improvement in position and prospects in China was not looked for as a result of the rebellion. "As a missionary, when I came to China, I felt all around the gloom of midnight darkness", wrote the Wesleyan, Rev. Josiah Cox from Canton.

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(1) Missionary Magazine, 1853, pp 204, 246-51; also Tidman to Legge in LMS Outgoing Letters-China (Box 4), Oct.24,1853.

(2) Cf. the conclusions of J.B.Littell in his article "Missionaries and Politics in China - The Taiping Rebellion" in Political Science Quarterly vol XLIII, 4 (Dec.1928) pp566-99. Littell dealt with the early reactions of American missionaries, and emphasised "the great divergences in American missionary opinion..... Contrary to the almost universal ideas of historians, missionary opinion even at the glorious beginning of the Taiping rebellion was anything but unanimous" (pp570-1). British missionaries were, I think, practically unanimous in favouring the rebel cause against the Manchus at first; the difference among them was mainly in the strength of their doubts as against their hopes. But the doubts were always present, and the hopes rather short-lived for the most part.

"Now the clouds are breaking and (though) I know not what the day may bring I hail the glimmering dawn".[1] Especially encouraging to the missionaries was the prospect of China being thrown open by a government friendly to them and their teachings, for little doubt was entertained that the fall of the Manchus was imminent.

> "The prospect thus presented to our view is indeed too glowing to be pressed", wrote Rev. Muirhead in October, 1853. "Should the country be thrown open, should we be permitted to penetrate into the regions beyond and unfold to their myriad, myriad inhabitants the tidings of a Saviour's love, it were a privilege too great to be realized in thought..... To the utmost extent of the influence of the insurgents idolatry is proscribed and Christianity in some of its most Protestant features established. That these principles would be maintained and acted upon, in the event of their obtaining the ascendancy, we have no reason to doubt, while such is the native feeling on religious subjects that little or no opposition need be apprehended from the great mass of the people, were the change in creed urgently insisted on....."[2]

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(1) Wesleyan Missionary Notices, 1853, p.158

(2) LMS. Central China Letters (Box I, 4), Muirhead to Tidman, Oct. 20, 1853.

The Anglican missionary, Rev. R. D. Jackson, also believed that the triumph of the rebels would result in "the annihilation of the exclusivism which has hitherto presented so formidable a barrier to the preaching of the gospel".(1) The Bishop of Victoria speculated on the possibility of a native Christian ministry being drawn from the ranks of the rebels,(2) while the Rev. W. H. Medhurst looked forward to the day when the Christian scriptures would replace the Confucian classics as the examination texts of China.(3) The Bishop, who was one of the most enthusiastic in his support of the rebellion, reported to the Church Missionary Society that "it appears a wonderful moral revolution. We behold a hundred-thousand Chinese living separated from their wives, abstaining from wine, opium, tobacco, quarrelling, lying and bad words, and engaging in daily worship, a common table, a common treasury - and no pay".(4) There could hardly be a more far-reaching change.

In England, William Gillespie a former London Missionary Society agent in China, called the rebellion a "mighty moral

(1) C.M.S. Letter Book-China (1851-9) p359, Jackson to Venn, July 18, 1853.
(2) C.M.S. Box of Bishop of Victoria's letters, April 7,1854 to Archbishop of Canterbury.
(3) L.M.S. Central China Letters (Box I,4), Medhurst to Tidman, Dec. 29, 1853.
(4) C.M.S. Letter Book - China (1851-9) p433, Dec.7, 1853; see also article by the Bishop in the Calcutta Review for March, 1854.

miracle",[1] while the Chinese Missionary Gleaner, the organ of the Chinese Evangelization Society, which was the forerunner of the China Inland Mission (1865), was persuaded that "these men will ultimately prove the pioneers of the greatest work that has been accomplished since the days of the apostles. The axe is laid at the root of idolatry, and the decayed trunk will soon fall".[2] Strongest proof of popular faith in the movement was provided by the Million New Testament Scheme, launched by the British and Foreign Bible Society. The subscription target, calculated at fourpence a copy, was soon passed and the two million mark reached by June, 1854.[3] Nineteenth century England wanted

(1) see W. Gillespie, op.cit., pp 210-38.
(2) Chinese Missionary Gleaner April, 1854, pp 73-4.
(3) On this scheme see W. Canton, A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society (1910), vol II pp447-52 and vol III pp 434-6; on its later working note Rev. J.S. Burdon in C. M. Intelligencer, 1860, p.283 - "The million scheme is still (Sept., 1860) being carried into effect; but experience is showing that it was at least a premature step. The Bibles were to have been printed for the benefit of imperfectly enlightened Christians.... (But) the military occupation of great parts of the country has neutralized all efforts at Missionary work among the insurgents; and the Bibles hitherto have had to be distributed among those who know nothing of, and care less for, the subjects of which the Bible treats, and thus the rebels having disappointed us, it has been found difficult judiciously to dispose of such an immense number of Bibles in the limited districts of the heathen to which we have been confined".

very much to hasten the conversion, which would also be the opening of China.

There were some, however, who even in 1853 viewed the movement with suspicion, if not with actual hostility. The Christian Times, though approving a policy of neutrality, was convinced that it was all a Jesuit plot, and that Taiping Christianity was "a palpable and offensive imposture". "Premature hopes and hasty sympathies cannot be too carefully discouraged", it insisted.(1) The Rev. W. H. Rule also argued, in quasi-scholarly fashion, on the basis of Taiping religious publications, that the teaching of the insurgents was "but a continuation or reproduction of the elementary teaching of the Jesuits in China", and saw nothing to further the cause of evangelical Christianity in the movement.(2) But for many others the rebellion was not only Christian but Protestant. This was for them its great virtue. The influence on Hung of the tracts distributed at Canton in 1837 by the American Baptist missionary, I. J. Roberts; Hung's later brief association with Roberts; the printing and circulation of portions of scripture in Protestant translations by the rebels; their destruction of temples and idols; the hostility shown towards them by Catholic missionaries in China - all these things were taken as evidence of the

(1) The Christian Times May 20, July 22, Aug. 5, 1853.
(2) W.H.Rule, The Religious Aspect of the Civil War in China (1853), esp. pp 38-9, 63.

essentially Protestant nature of the movement. "It is with Protestant Christianity these people sympathize, not with Romanism", reported the committee of the Church Missionary Society in October, 1853. "The idolatry of Rome is utterly repugnant to them. But to Protestant Christianity they look as a kindred element, and in their ignorance of its real character, believe it to be identical with their own religious views".(1)

This concern to fit the Taiping movement into Western religious categories, rather than an "ignorant fervour" which failed to recognize the "heresies" in it, was the great limitation in the attitude of the Protestant missionaries. Their failure to consider it as a possible Christian movement which was neither Protestant nor Catholic, but simply Chinese, made their ultimate disappointment in it certain. But given their intellectual background, compounded of a rigorous set of religious beliefs and of assumptions, by no means peculiar to the missionary, of the superiority of all things Western to anything Chinese; and given also the claims made by Hung and by the Eastern King, Yang, to new and authoritative revelation, it would have been surprising

(1) CMS Circulars and Other Papers Vol I No175 - "Minute of the Committee of the CMS on the Present State and Future Prospects of China", p.7; cf also W.Gillespie, op.cit., pp228-9; Wesleyan Missionary Notices, Sept.1853, p.137; and above p.309.

had the missionaries adjusted themselves to the idea of so Chinese a form of Christianity as this.(1)

What is surprising, though, is that the missionaries made so little positive effort in the first years of the rebellion to influence it in the direction of greater Protestant orthodoxy. They talked of this and saw the danger of still greater heresy if they did not. Yet apart from the attempts of a few missionaries, mainly American, to reach Nanking, no serious effort seems to have been made during 1853-4 to establish a permanent mission among the rebels. The difficult and changing military situation, and probably also discouragement from the consular authorities, help to explain this, but in view of their mixed fears and hopes about the nature of the movement it seems hardly to have been consistent with their own large objectives in China.(2) There was not even any significant

(1) On Taiping Christianity see esp. E.P.Boardman, Christian Influence upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion (1952). There seems little doubt that the real extent of Christian influence upon the Taipings has been exaggerated in most Western accounts of the movement.

(2) See J.B.Littell, op.cit., pp.578-86, on the visits or attempted visits of American missionaries to the rebels about this time, esp.p584 on official discouragement. Among British missionaries the Presbyterian Rev.W.C.Burns attempted to get to Nanking in 1855 (Reports of the China Mission at Amoy, Nov.1855, p6). But there is no report of a missionary representative included in the 'Rattler'-'Styx' visit of June, 1854, and Bowring almost certainly did not wish to encourage such visits. Fishbourne reported of Bowring, "He hasoften told me that he has no sympathy with the Protestant Missionaries; that he has no belief that they have done anything in China; and that he has

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increase in the number of missionaries in the field in the years after 1853,[1] and at the end of that year Medhurst was writing

> "This is a class of men that can with difficulty be controlled. They must for a time be allowed to go their own way. It may not be in every respect the way which we could approve, but it does not appear to run directly counter to our objects. In the meantime we can go on in ours".[2]

Such a policy invited the growth of heresy. Until Elgin's voyage at the end of 1858, there were no further direct contacts between British missionaries and the rebels.

During these years the decline in the fortunes of the rebellion on the one hand, and the improved prospects created for the missionaries by the Treaty of Tientsin on the other, meant that less and less consideration was given to the possible place of the Taipings in missionary plans for the conversion of China. The element of doubt, present from the beginning, became more marked in their observations, now only made occasionally. Alexander Wylie reported to the London

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concluding (2) from previous page ... a most thorough belief that the Roman Catholic Missionaries have done a great deal". (Wesleyan Missionary Notices June-July,1855,p.131). Bowring was often accused of being under Roman Catholic influence in his view of the rebellion (see The Record Jan.1,1855, and Chinese Missionary Gleaner Feb,1855,p165).

(1) this page.. See Appendix D. Appeals were launched and funds raised, but it was difficult to get suitable candidates (see Tidman to Medhurst Sept. 2,1854,in LMS Outgoing Letters -China, Box 5).

(2) Missionary Magazine, 1854, p.56.

Missionary Society in June, 1854, on the "evident reaction in the popular mind" following the visit of the American Commissioner, McLane, to Nanking.

> "The arrogance of their assumptions, one chief calling himself the Son of God, and another entitling himself the Holy Spirit, has given rise to a feeling of disappointment in the minds of many of their friends..... That Tae-ping-wang will succeed in subverting the present dynasty there seems little room for doubt", Wylie added. "Whether he will realize the high anticipations that have been formed respecting his religious character is more open to doubt".(1)

"In common with all friends of the Chinese Mission", the secretary of the London Missionary Society wrote in October, 1854, "we have been greatly perplexed and dismayed by the extravagant and blasphemous doctrines recently preached by (Hung)....." But while it was "difficult at first to disengage the mind from the pleasant illusions which so fair a beginning had inspired", he felt that much missionary labour would have to be expended yet before China was converted. The Taipings no longer seemed likely allies in that work.(2) By September, 1855, even

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(1) L.M.S. Central China Letters (Box I,4) Wylie to Tidman, June 26, 1854.

(2) L.M.S.Outgoing Letters - China (Box 5) Tidman to Muirhead, Oct. 22, 1854.

Medhurst, then an old and sick man, was admitting that "our estimate of the insurgent movement must undergo considerable modifications..... We cannot but withhold our assent to their being denominated Christian brethren until we know more of them, and are enabled to separate the precious from the vile".(1)

The death of Yang, the Eastern King, in 1856, encouraged some to hope that "the most mischievous and dangerous element in the revolution has thus been taken away", but the Church Missionary Record warned that "with such internal elements among the Taiping leaders, it will be wise for the friends of Christian missions to form very moderate expectations of the immediate results to the cause of true Christianity."(2) The Chinese Evangelization Society clung more persistently than any other missionary body in England to its early high hopes in the rebellion, and in January, 1857, still hoped for "the best from this remarkable movement. The good even at present far outweighs the evil".(3) But by that time missionary opinion generally, both in England and in China, had moved very far from the hopes of 1853.

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(1) L.M.S. Central China Letters (Box II,1) Medhurst to Tidman, Sept.6, 1855.

(2) C.M.Record, 1857, pp334-5; cf.Procs. of the C.M.S.1854-5, p.143.

(3) Chinese Missionary Gleaner, Jan.1857,p.16.

The Treaty of Tientsin strengthened this tendency to look away from the Taipings. Article VIII of the treaty gave specific recognition to the Christian religion as "inculcating the practice of virtue". Persons teaching or professing it were to be entitled to the protection of the Chinese authorities, "nor shall any such, peaceably pursuing their calling and not offending against the laws, be persecuted or interfered with". The kind of hopes entertained after the less favourable treaty of 1842 were renewed, while in appealing for funds to extend the mission in China, the directors of the London Missionary Society observed significantly that

> "In the year, 1854, in the expectation that the providence of God was about to open China through the influence of internal insurrection, a special appeal was made to the friends of the Society for funds to enable the Directors to take advantage of the anticipated event. The prospects of that day were not realized; but God has now answered our supplications by other means, with the prospects of happier results and greater security".(1)

(1) Missionary Magazine, 1859,p.43; cf. also C.M.Record, Dec. 1858,p349, quoting the Bombay Guardian - "Four years ago we were hoping almost everything from the success and policy of the Tae-Ping-Wang party; but God has brought about the liberty that was sought in a very different way". For the hopes aroused by the new treaty note Rev.G.John to Tidman, July 30,1858 in L.M.S. Central China Letters (Box II,2)- "Thus China has been opened almost unexpectedly to the missionary, the merchant and the man of science. The country is virtually in our hands, and it will be the fault of the churches at home if they don't go forth and take possession of the land and gain a permanent footing in the very heart of each of the eighteen provinces."

On this view the existence of a native Christian movement of such heretical tendencies as the Taiping rebellion was likely to be an embarrassment rather than an aid to the missionary cause in China. Happier results seemed likely without it.

There was as yet no overt missionary hostility towards the rebellion. But whereas in 1853-4 they had urged a policy of neutrality, confident that the overthrow of the Manchus was certain if no foreign intervention was forthcoming, by 1858 the missionaries appear to have been much more dispassionately neutral. Given the "decreptitude, cruelty and corruption of the Manchow Tartar Dynasty" on the one hand, and the "degeneracy and decay" of the rebels on the other, the once very pro-Taiping Bishop of Victoria was convinced that "non-intervention in the civil convulsion of China was clearly the course for British statesmen to pursue".

"In the earlier stages of the Taeping movement" continued the Bishop, "the entrance of Protestant missionaries among them at Nankin might have turned the tide in the right direction, and given a sounder character to their practice and belief. As it is we must patiently abide the issue, moderating excessive hopes and repressing undue despondency and fear. However much a nearer view of the rebel movement may hereafter repel our minds, it must at the same time be remembered that doubtless, in the hands of Providence, it will have accomplished a good result".

It would have weakened the hold of Buddhism, scattered the seeds of Scriptural knowledge and generally prepared the way for a purer faith, the Bishop believed. "If truth, when deformed and caricatured, has been thus effective in demolishing error, what may not be hoped for from the unimpeded circulation of the Holy Scriptures and the zealous teaching of Protestant Missionaries through the length and breadth of the land".(1) The rebellion had helped prepare the way, perhaps, but little more could now be said for it. By 1858-9, British missionaries in China were no longer "partisans" of the rebels; they were almost above the battle.(2)

The resurgence of Taiping power about 1860 naturally forced the missionaries, in common with other Westerners in China, to think of the rebels once more as possible masters of the empire. For a time this prospect renewed the hopes of some among them in the movement, but by the end of 1861 missionary opinion was decidedly hostile. For some indeed, it had even become more dangerous to the cause of "true"

(1) C.M.Record, 1859, pp2-3; also in Missionary Magazine, 1859, pp 25-7 and the China Mail Oct.18,1858; cf also his Charge to the Anglican Clergy March 16,1860, for similar sentiments.

(2) Cf.however, G.Wingrove Cooke, China in 1857-8, pp106-8. Cooke was the Times special correspondent with Elgin's first mission, and he reported that "the missionaries still hang their hopes upon this rebel cause". Although it is no doubt true that the missionaries retained some kind of hopes in the Taipings their reports and publications in the later fifties show that these were really not very great. In a sermon published in 1859 as The Land of Sinim,

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Christianity in China than the heathen Manchu government itself. During the later years of the rebellion, many more missionaries had opportunities to observe the rebels at first hand than had been the case about 1853. Missionary representatives accompanied the expeditions of Elgin and Hope up the Yangtze; others made independent journeys to visit the rebels at Soochow and Nanking; while still others were present at Ningpo to witness the capture and occupation of that city at the end of 1861. There is a considerable number of reports of these observations in the missionary records, and of course conclusions varied. But on the whole it did not take the missionaries long to decide that, both from a political and a religious point of view, the Taiping rebellion was a movement in which they could place no real hopes and which they had no prospect of changing. By 1862 missionary energies and interests were turned to developing the new stations made possible by the Treaty of Tientsin, and the last years of the rebellion are largely ignored in their

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Legge considered the favourable prospects for the future Protestant evangelisation of China, but made no mention of the rebels; nor did J.A.James in his appeal to extend the work in China in God's Voice to the British Churches (1858); W.C.Milne in his Life in China pp513-14 discounted the religious worth of the movement; while Griffith John, in the letter quoted p.318(1), noted the great need for native agents and evangelists in the future work of converting 400 millions of immortal souls, but did not suggest the rebels as a possible source of supply, as the Bishop of Victoria had in 1853.

records, although a few among them protested at the change in British policy.

The first British missionary to renew direct contact with the rebels had been Alexander Wylie, who accompanied Elgin's expedition at the end of 1858. The doubts Wylie had expressed about the movement in 1854 were far from resolved by this visit. The Christian element in it, if it ever existed, had been "overborne by other interests", Wylie stated in a report to the British authorities, "and while much of the letter has been retained, the spirit has almost entirely evaporated". There was little cause to think they could ever be admitted into the "confraternity of Christian nations", for the tendency in the movement now was towards indifference and atheism. From a political and social point of view Wylie considered there was "little feeling of security among the people in the territories under their control", and little discipline was apparent in their camps. "Opium and tobacco smoking, although not now pursued with the vigour that it was formerly, is yet a very common practice among them(sic). Spirits also may be obtained in small quantities in their territory. Prostitution is said to be very uncommon."(1) To the London Missionary Society he reported that the only

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(1) This report is enclosed in F.O.17/322 Admiralty to F.O. March 2,1859.

form of worship common among them was a grace said at meals, but he thought the chances of a foreign mission to Nanking leading them "to abandon their errors" remote.(1) Wylie's implied judgment that the rebels were, from the missionary point of view, practically incorrigible, was supported by the findings of later visitors, some of whom were for a time interested in the idea of working at Nanking.

In the middle of 1860, however, there was a temporary renewal of hope among some of the missionaries stationed at Shanghai. In July, three representatives of the London Missionary Society and one of the Baptist Missionary Society visited the rebels at Soochow and reported that

> "From the information acquired it is evident that the religious element enters very powerfully into this great revolutionary movement. Nothing can be more erroneous than the supposition that it is a purely political one, and that religion occupies a subordinate place in it. .....The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are their proposed standard of faith now as they were at the

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(1) For this report see Missionary Magazine 1859,pp179-81; see also L.M.S.Outgoing Letters - China (Box 5) for Tidman's comments upon it (June 10,1859) - "it may prove no less difficult a task for the Christian Teacher to disabuse their minds of (their) errors, than to convince the avowed idolater of the falseness of his system".

"commencement of the movement. This is a very important fact. As long as they receive them as the word of God, we have reasonable grounds to hope that their errors will gradually be corrected".(1)

This report led the London Missionary Society to issue a special circular expressing "sanguine hope" in the movement once again,(2) and in a letter to the Foreign Office in November, 1860, representatives of all the major missionary societies, save the Church Missionary Society, urged the continuance of a policy of neutrality. They criticised the recent repulse of the rebels from Shanghai as being "at direct variance with the impartial and dignified neutrality of this Country as expressed by former British Authorities in China". They watched the progress of the insurrectionary movement "with lively interest not unmixed with hope", and discerned a "decided attachment to Christianity" in the leaders of the movement, despite their confused and imperfect acquaintance with the truths of Revelation.(3)

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(1) Missionary Magazine, Oct.1860, pp270-7 esp.273-4.

(2) L.M.S. printed circular "Chinese Insurgents" dated Aug.28, 1860 (in vol II of Newspaper Cuttings on China in L.M.S. Library).

(3) F.O.17/347 Rev. J. Hamilton to F.O. Nov.(22), 1860.

The strongest advocate for the Taiping cause among the British missionaries in China was the Rev. Griffith John, of the London Missionary Society. With the Rev. Joseph Edkins of the same Society, John paid a second visit to Soochow in August, 1860, and in November went with the Baptist missionary, the Rev. Z. Kloeckers to Nanking.(1) On the basis of these journeys he published a pamphlet in which he gave a very favourable and detailed description of the Taiping religious and political organization, and in which he argued strongly for a policy of non-intervention.

> "Notwithstanding all their errors, which are neither few nor insignificant, I firmly believe that they are the chosen instruments to relieve China from the darkness and thraldom of idolatry and, in connection with foreign missionaries, to bless her with the light and liberty of the Gospel", wrote John. "... The interests of religion, commerce and civilization, point out <u>neutrality</u> as the one legitimate ground for Western nations to take".(2)

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(1) For accounts of these visits see <u>Missionary Magazine</u>, 1860, pp.296-302; ibid, 1861, pp54-8; <u>Baptist Missionary Herald</u>, July 1861, pp105-11. Bruce was much opposed to these "indiscreet visits" to the rebels by missionaries, and did his best to dissuade Edkins and John (A&P 1861(2754) pp77,92).

(2) Rev. G. John, <u>The Chinese Rebellion</u> (1861) p.13 etc.

To the secretary of the London Missionary Society John was able to report that on his visit to Nanking he secured an Edict of toleration, promising freedom of movement and of preaching in Taiping territory to all Christian missionaries, so that the way seemed open to repair the deficiencies and heresies of the rebel faith. "They have doubtless gross defects", John concluded, "but in every respect, religious, political and social, they are centuries ahead of the Imperialists".(1)

Even in 1860, however, not all the British missionaries in China shared such convictions. The Church Missionary Society's representative at Shanghai, the Rev. J. Hobson, warned against the reports of the London Mission's representatives, whom he described as "to a man, red hot Rebels..... some of them seem determined to write up the Rebels with an amount of faith, hope and charity sufficient to whitewash the blackest character who ever lived".(2) In London mission circles also there were those who doubted. James Legge, for example, wrote from Hong Kong that he could not "make the same apology for the errors of the rebels which our brethren at the north seem disposed to do, nor be equally sanguine as

(1) Missionary Magazine, 1861, p54-8. The Edict of Toleration was printed there, and also in the North China Herald Dec.29,1860.

(2) C.M.S.Letter Book - China (1859-62) p80. Hobson to Venn, Sept.3,1860.

to the prospects of their ultimate success. Unless they can attach the people to them they will never get the empire, and thus far they have failed to establish in any place a vigorous and righteous government".(1) Legge did have some hopes in the reform of the movement through the influence of Hung Jen-kan, Hung Hsui-ch'uan's cousin, who, after spending several years in the London Missionary Society's employ at Hong Kong, had reached Nanking in April, 1859, and been made the Kan Wang, or Shield King. But "Hung Jin", as he was called by the missionaries at the time, proved a great disappointment. "At first when I heard of his being among them and read his Essays and Memorials, I was willing to hope that he would be able to remedy the crying evils which disfigured their movement," wrote Legge in October, 1860. "But then came the melancholy fact of his own adoption of the practice of polygamy. It was wrong to fight against them as the French and English did at Shanghae, but the salvation of China does not seem likely to come through them".(2)

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(1) L.M.S. South China Letters (Box VII)2) Legge to Tidman July 25,1860.

(2) ibid, Oct.27, 1860; cf.also D.Matheson Our Mission in China (1882, 1st edn 1866) pp12-13. Donald Matheson resigned from the firm of Jardine, Matheson & Co. out of disapproval of its opium trading activities and was very active in the missionary work of the Presbyterian Church of England.

During 1861 such doubts and disappointments, rather than John's optimism and faith, increased among the British missionaries, and the tone of their comments upon the rebellion became steadily harsher. As the Bishop of Victoria had anticipated, a nearer view of the rebellion servedto repel them, on political as well as religious grounds. The Rev. W. Muihead, who joined Hope's first expedition up the Yangtze, reported after some three weeks in Nanking, that

> "in a secular point of view the movement at present is only destructive. It breaks up all domestic and social ties; it annihilates trade....and blasts the peace and prospects of the empire..... In a religious point of view the movement at present is no less destructive... It is proposed to Christianize the empire by a process truly Chinese and perhaps effectual in a mere nominal light. The means in operation will, we fear, be productive of vast mischief, and only serve to introduce a spurious kind of Christianity".(1)

Reform was wanted in China, Muirhead added, but "for this end we do not consider a change of dynasty at all requisite". After the same expedition, the Rev. J. Hobson reported to the Church Missionary Society that the religious men among the rebels were "but a very small portion of the whole, and

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(1) A & P 1862 (2976) pp 18-22.

"the religion of the religious is but a cross between Mahommedanism and Mormonism.... I saw Roberts dressed in his dirty, yellow, Chinese robe, a miserable spectacle of dirt and slovenliness, a reproach to Western civilization, and I very much fear, of our religion likewise.... Call the Rebels 'the national party'.....! Why, the people loathe them - the very land abhors them....."(1)

This rejection of the claim that the Taipings represented any longer a popular movement was expressed more judiciously by the Presbyterian missionary, Rev. W. C. Burns.

> "In regard to whether the population are generally favourable to this rebel movement", he wrote in March, 1861, "I would remark that it can hardly be supposed possible that they should be favourable to this or any other movement in which they are the chief sufferers..... At first, indeed, when the Nankin party seemed to be going to victory, there was evidently a Chinese national feeling in favour of their success; but that feeling has, I fear, long since given place to a sad despondency at the prospect of an indefinitely prolonged vivil war. Of late years the ranks of the rebel party have been recruited partly by the banditti,

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(1) C.M.S. China Letters, Hobson to Venn May 18,1861.

> "who abound everywhere, and partly by forcibly carrying off the flower of the youth from the various places which they visit. When these new followers have been a few months among them, and have passed into regions where, in language as well as in other respects, they are strangers, it is almost impossible for them to make their escape, and so, from necessity, they become adherents of the party". (1)

A great deal of missionary comment upon the rebellion by this state was obviously warped and prejudiced by the bitterness of disappointed hopes, and by that peculiar twist in human nature which makes men feel somehow more bitter towards those who come part of the way with them, and then diverge, than towards those who were never among their company. But there was also much that was balanced and perceptive in missionary observations on the Taiping movement, as Burns' statement illustrates.

Most disappointing to the British missionaries was the realization that, despite the Edict of toleration granted to John at the end of 1860, there were considerable difficulties in the way of attempting to establish mission stations in Taiping territory. Edkins and John seriously considered making such a move, but after a further visit to Nanking in

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(1) English Presbyterian Messenger, 1861, p.225.

March, 1861, became convinced that "the design of converting the Taiping chief to correct scriptural opinions was a hopeless one". What Hung chiefly wanted, they concluded, was recognition from foreign missionaries who would not challenge, and by their presence would implicitly acknowledge, his claim to special revelation and religious authority. He wrote agreeing to allow them residence in Nanking, Edkins noted, "as if he entertained the hope of persuading the foreign missionaries to recognize him as a sort of Son of God". Edkins, though disappointed, did not become violently hostile to the rebels, and seems to have retained a sort of affection for them; but he concluded of them that they were "not statesmen".

> "They have a certain system and strong convictions regarding some great religious truths. They have entered upon a political enterprise too great for them. Under the influence of these convictions and undaunted by difficulties which they cannot surmount, they are careless of the future, and indulge in imaginary recreations of a reconstituted China, modelled by themselves, or rather by some force of fate, which is to work the change for them".(1)

(1) J.Edkins, Narrative of a Visit to Nankin, which was printed as an appendix to a collection of letters by his wife, Jane Edkins, published as China's Scenes and Peoples (1863). See esp. pp280-1, 292-3,299-300; also Edkins to Tidman May 12, 1861, in LMS Central China Letters (Box II,3).

After much debate with themselves, therefore, Edkins and John abandoned the idea of a mission in Nanking, the one to go north to Tientsin and the other inland to Hankow. "It wasxxx our hope at one time that the Tai Ping movement was destined to be a direct means to the evangelization of China", John wrote in March, 1862. "In this we may be disappointed. Be that as it may, there can be little doubt of its indirect influence for good".(1) He could not turn his back entirely on the rebels, but the high hopes of 1860 had gone.

Another to consider the same project was the Wesleyan missionary, Rev. Josiah Cox, who went on Hope's second voyage to Nanking at the end of 1861. Cox reported the Shield King as saying in reply to his query whether he should come and live in Nanking, "missionaries ought not to come, for the doctrines are different and the Heavenly King will not allow other doctrines than his own". Only Hung's former teacher, Roberts, stayed long at Nanking, and he abandoned the rebels soon after Cox's visit, pronouncing Hung to be "a crazy man". Hopes of reforming the rebels were by then altogether abandoned, and Cox, who in 1853 had hailed the glimmering dawn, now reported "I did not apprehend that, on a nearer view of these insurgents, they would appear to my judgment so bereft of hopeful elements. I certainly at present fail to discover

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(1) Missionary Magazine, 1862, p212.

"amongst them any party which promises to be capable of administering a government, and can only regard them as marauding hordes....."(1)

Finally, and perhaps most extreme and comprehensive of all, were the condemnations uttered by the Church Missionary Society's representatives at Ningpo as they witnessed the Taiping occupation of that city, which was their main base in China. Sufficient to note here that Rev. W. Russell condemned them not only on religious and political grounds, but also for their "impracticable system".

> "A training of several years in the practice of living together in plunder, accustomed during this time to overlook the rights of others, has so seered their consciences that the principle of Meum and Teum seems now completely forgotten. Consequently, as there is no security under their rule for life and property, the people fly from them wherever they are, so that even in those places longest occupied by them, there is not the slightest appearance of the resumption of trade or of any confidence in them on the part of the people generally".(2)

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(1) Wesleyan Missionary Notices May, 1862, pp64-6; on Roberts departure see A & P 1862 (3058) pp 6-7.

(2) C.M.S.Letter Book - China (1859-62) p189, Russell to Venn, Jan.15,1862; also C.M.S.China Letters, Burden to Venn, Feb. 4,1862; C.M.Record, 1862, pp 34-5, 66-7 and Procs. of the C.M.S., 1861-2, pp192-9.

This kind of reference to the socialistic tendencies of the Taiping movement is rare in missionary comments, and it would certainly be an exaggeration to suggest that fear of radical social doctrines was a major reason for their rejection of it. They rejected it, not simply because it was, from their point of view, grossly heretical, but because they became convinced that it was incorrigibly so; and also because, politically, it seemed to them to give no promise of the stability or order necessary to the missionary enterprise. In short, the Taipings appeared by 1862 to be "more hostile to Christianity than the Imperialists themselves".(1)

Presented with such reports, the home societies naturally also abandoned their remaining hopes in the rebel movement.

> "The favourable judgment which some of our Missionaries heretofore entertained in relation to the character of the Taeping Insurgents, has been greatly qualified"; the London Missionary Society's annual report of 1862 stated, ".....So bold and blasphemous are the pretensions of the Tien Wang, and so cruel and oppressive is the exercise of his despotism, that any immediate advantage to the cause of Christianity resulting from the success of his adherents is well nigh relinquished".(2)

(1) Report from Amoy, Jan.24,1862, cit. Evangelical Christendom, April,1862, p 207.

(2) Missionary Magazine, 1862, p173; cf. also Wesleyan Missionary Society Reports, 1862, pp48-9 and Annual Reports of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1862, p.10.

The last years of the rebellion were passed over without much comment in missionary records, and there were no obvious stirrings of regret at its final defeat, or doubts lest perhaps a great opportunity had passed. It was for the later historian to ask, "did ever Christians have so golden an opportunity of winning a great heathen nation for Christ?"(1) Speculation as to possible lost opportunities seems rather pointless, however, for it is difficult to see that either the fate of the rebellion or the course of British policy towards it would have been any different, even had the Protestant missionaries given it strong and consistent support throughout.

The missionaries of the time, busily establishing new stations in the north and the interior of China, under a treaty guaranteeing them full toleration, had no difficulty in finding some place for the rebellion in their conception of God's plan for China. Griffith John was sure that "this wonderful movement had not been permitted to rise and progress so far without some great productive end."(2) For others the

(1) Eugene Stock, History of the Church Missionary Society (1899) vol.II, p.312; cf. also C.P.Fitzgerald, Revolution in China (1952) pp 123-4, 141-2, and E. R.Hughes The Invasion of China by the Western World (1937), p.68. cf. also J.Foster, "The Christian Origins of the Taiping Rebellion" in International Review of Missions vol.XL, No.158 (April 1951) pp 156, 167.

(2) Missionary Magazine, 1862, p.212.

work of the rebels had been "one of judgment alone, sent on this miserable land for the long night of gross idolatry and fearful iniquity".(1) The Rev. Hudson Taylor saw their influence "in shaking the confidence of the people in their gods of wood and stone, and in leading them to feel the need of something better", as one of the factors favouring the future work of evangelization in China.(2) "Whether the Taepings get the whole of the country or part of it, or whether the whole be regained by the Imperialists, in either case we have good prospects before us", reported Rev. Z. Kloeckers.to the Baptist Missionary Society in 1862.(3) Since his work was God's work the missionary felt he could not lose.

Some of the British missionaries, despite their condemnation of the movement, continued to advocate a policy of neutrality.

> "The Manchous have had their time in China as the Stuarts had in Britain and the Bourbons had in France", wrote Legge in July, 1862. "It is not ours to hasten their downfall by interfering against them in the struggle

(1) C.M.S.Letter Book - China (1859-62) p188, Russell to Venn, Jan. 15, 1862.

(2) J.Hudson Taylor China: Its Spiritual Needs and Claims (1865) p.43; also G.E.Moule The China Mission (n.d.) p.67.

(3) Baptist Missionary Herald, Aug.1862, p.122.

"between them and the Taepings, but neither are they worthy that we should interfere on their behalf..... There was one fair course for us to pursue - a real, impartial neutrality".(1)

This letter was widely published, the secretary of the London Missionary Society forwarding it to the Foreign Office, at the same time expressing the hope that, if an "honest return to neutrality" was impossible, the British government should at least lay down limits within which its action would be confined. "Let the severity of our dealings with the Taepings be tempered with mercy", he wrote; "it should not be ours to co-operate in their extermination".(2) The British government was not so sympathetic to the work of the Protestant missionaries in China as to be ready to adapt its policies to suit their views, and if it confined itself to limited intervention, such as was suggested in this letter from the secretary of the leading missionary society in England, it did so for reasons of its own. In any case not all the British missionaries were opposed to action being taken against the rebels, some judging such a policy to be "the only possible one, the only honourable one, under the circumstances".(3)

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(1) Missionary Magazine, 1862, p.286.

(2) F.O.17/385 Tidman to F.O.Oct.30, 1862.

(3) Archdeacon A.E.Moule Personal Recollections of the Taiping Rebellion 1861-3 (1884) pp18-19. (Moule was among the C.M.S. representatives at Ningpo 1861-2).

It is not my purpose here to pass judgment on the British Missionaries for their attitude towards the Taiping rebellion, but two points seem worth making about the kinds of criticism, illustrated at the beginning of this chapter, which have been directed against them. In the first place they were, as a group, less ignorantly fervent and uncritical in their early support for the Taipings than many of their nineteenth century critics accused them of being.

> "It is assumed by many that Missionaries have been and still are their advocates, in spite of the plain witness of undeniable and melancholy facts", Legge wrote in his letter just quoted. "I do not wonder that some should do so; they are under the influence of a foregone conclusion - the result of ignorance I will suppose, rather than malice - namely, that Missionaries, as a class, are weak and ignorant men, with a tendency to fanaticism. The utmost that can be alleged against the Missionaries is that when the rebel movement first came prominently before the world in 1853, after the capture of Nanking, many of them hailed the religious sentiments expressed in the tracts and manifestos of their leaders, much wondering whereunto they would grow, and hoping as they wondered. When they knew that portions of the Word of God were printed and circulated, without note

"and comment, they rejoiced exceedingly - and strange it would have been if they had not done so; but when, in the course of time, the blossom of promise connected with the movement began to wither and die, their regret was corresponding to the hopeful interest which they had previously cherished; and as they had opportunity, they remonstrated with the Taepings themselves, nor did they hide anything which they knew from the public. As I carefully send my thoughts back over the past nine years, I can single out from amongst the Missionary body in China, but one solitary, eccentric exception to the statement just given".(1)

Legge glosses a little, as who does not in his own defence, but this gives a less distorted picture of missionary opinion about the Taiping rebellion than the statements of some other writers.

(1) Missionary Magazine ;862, p.283. The exception Legge had in mind was probably Roberts. On the missionaries as ignorant fanatics, it seems to me probable that the general intellectual standard of the Protestant missionaries in China before 1860 was higher than it later became, when many more were attracted by easier conditions of service. Many of them in the fifties were certainly contemptuously ignorant of Chinese civilisation, as were most of their countrymen, but among a fairly small body of men there was a significant proportion whose attitude to and knowledge of that civilisation must command respect - Medhurst, Wylie, Legge, Edkins all made important contributions to Western studies on China.

In the second place, the missionaries' ultimate rejection of this "Christian" rebellion in China, complete and extreme in many cases as it was, should not be regarded as due simply to their sectarian narrow-mindedness. Certainly, being nineteenth century evangelical Protestants, they took a rather narrow view of what was and was not Christian, and they showed little capacity to adjust themselves to the idea of a non-Western form of their faith. But in a real sense they faced not just another kind of Christian sect but virtually another religion - a religion as much the personal creation of Hung Hsiu-ch'üan and of the Chinese traditions he inherited as of any effective Christian influences. It is too simple to talk of the Taiping rebellion as a Christian rebellion. It was a Chinese rebellion which developed its own peculiar ideology around a few, mainly Old Testament, Christian ideas, but the influence of these ideas upon it seems to have been less profound than some later critics of the missionaries have maintained.(1)

It seems to me, therefore, not very surprising that the British missionaries in China eventually reacted to the Taiping

(1) E.P.Boardman, op.cit., pp113-14, concludes that "As a result largely of the character of the founder, the Taipings were not exposed to the more vital part of the Christian ethic....The Taiping religion was still not Christianity". also, K.S.Latourette A History of Christian Missions in China (1929) pp295-8. It depends, of course, upon what one takes to be essential to Christianity, but Luther's claim that every man was his own priest was hardly revolutionary at all compared to Hung's claim to direct new revelation and semi-divine authority.

rebellion as they did. I find it also difficult to believe that the result, whether for themselves or the Taipings, would have been very different had they supported the rebel movement throughout. The missionaries failed to evangelize China or to exert any very effective Christian influence upon the emerging revolution of the Chinese people. That they would have had any greater success by identifying themselves more closely with the defeated Taipings is very unlikely.

CHAPTER X

BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION

"Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay". Tennyson's famous line sums up the prevailing attitude of nineteenth century England towards China, that "vast, quaint, stagnant, isolated community of three hundred millions, which has walled itself up for three thousand years", as the leading organ of public opinion in the country once described it.(1) The static, unchanging society of the Far East was frequently contrasted with the dynamic, progressive society of the West, of which England itself was the pre-eminent example, and it became almost a moral duty, as it was a determined intention, to open China to "civilisation", that is to material science, to Christianity and to trade.

The "opening of China" was achieved in the middle decades of the nineteenth century by the use of force, mainly British, applied from the outside. But there was always the hope that it might be done more peacefully, and more economically, by co-operation from within. There were many British attempts to encourage this, from Lord Macartney's embassy at the end of the eighteenth century to the negotiations for

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(1) The "Times" Jan,19, 1858

treaty revision in the middle of the nineteenth, after it had been found that the first breach made by force in 1842 was inadequate for England's purpose. The persistent refusal of the Manchu government to respond to these attempts at peaceful penetration meant that if China was to be effectively opened to the West, which was the issue by the eighteen-fifties, that government had either to be forced to give way or be replaced by one which would be readier to co-operate with the Western powers. For a short time in 1853 it seemed that the latter alternative was a real possibility.

News of the early great successes of the Taiping rebels was welcomed in England fundamentally for the promise it contained that the "isolation" and exclusivism of China were at last about to end.

> "The issue of the contest now going on will be the opening of China to the European world. It is impossible to over-rate the wonderful significance of these words - the opening of China. The greatest, the most compact, the most intelligent, the most enterprising, the most industrious and the most populous nation of the East.... will then form part of the vast union of civilisation which has metamorphosed the West, and must produce still greater revolution in the East". (1)

(1) (H.Vizetelly) The Chinese Revolution (1853). Authorship is uncertain; the last part of the work is composed largely of extracts from newspaper editorials (Times, Morning Post,&c)

Noting the struggle of "the two dynasties" in China and anticipating further Taiping success at Peking itself, the Daily News judged the insurrection to be "the commencement, not only of great moral changes in China, but also of great intellectual development which will end in bringing the immense Empire of the East into communion with Western civilisation. It would be madness therefore on our part to interfere in a struggle the consequences of which promise to be as advantageous to the Chinese as to ourselves". (1)

"Be the government of China what it may", said the Times, "it cannot be worse than that which now seems likely to be overthrown. The Mantchoo dynasty has shown itself ready, whenever it dared, to persecute the Christian religion, to restrict the foreign trade of the empire, and to evade its engagements with foreign nations.... It is not improbable that the rebellion now occurring in China may be destined to play a most important part in the extraordinary events and discoveries of late years, to unite the extremities of what we term the Eastern and Western world, and to complete that circle of civilisation and unrestricted intercourse which will one day encompass the globe". (2)

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(1) Daily News, Sept. 19, 1853.
(2) The Times July 18, 1853.

It would be very impolitic for any Christian power to interfere in the struggle, The Times added. It depended in all probability upon the final success or defeat of the Taipings, The British Journal wrote, "whether our relations with the celestial empire shall become indefinitely extended, or whether they shall be subject to restrictions still more harassing than those they have hitherto experienced at the jealous hands of its present rulers".(1) Unlike British observers in China itself, there were few in England who doubted in 1853 that the success of the rebels would mean a vast extension and improvement of British relations with China.

It is some measure of the confidence and optimism of mid-Victorian England that there was no sense of alarm at the prospect of a sleepy giant with ten times the population of England itself "awakening" and joining the family of nations. Change must come to China, as to India, Japan and the other "obscure nations of the earth", observed the Morning Post. These were being sought out,

> "they see their betters, mingle with them, imitate them, learn their arts and share their improvements. To this 'genius' of our 'epoch' China, like the rest of the world, must yield and is yielding.... By the force of circumstances, China must be revolutionised".

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(1) The British Journal, Oct.1853,p289.

It would be less a revolution than an awakening, the Post added, "and a fearful awakening too". But fearful for China, not for the West.

> "Four hundred millions coming suddenly upon the knowledge that all their philosophy is a lie will be an unprecedented spectacle. A trying crisis will that be when the Celestial Empire opens its eyes to read that all along it has treasured up a false history, a false geography, a false chronology, a false morality, a false religion....."(1)

The popular Chambers Edinburgh Journal felt more simply that, now "the spell which has hitherto made this singular people move in circles" was about to be broken, "we may look forward to a great and interesting future for China".(2) At least one voice was raised to protest against "the common but preposterous notion, that this most ancient of empires had undergone no changes since its first establishment", and to suggest that the rebellion would, "in conjunction with the influences of new ideas pressing upon them from without, inaugurate a stirring and revival of the national intellect, and the development of practical abilities among them which

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(1) Morning Post, Aug.10, 1853.

(2) Chambers Edinburgh Journal, Sept. 10, 1853, p.165.

will astonish the self complacent critics of the West".[1] But for the most part it was a confidently patronising interest which was displayed towards the struggle of the Taipings in China.

The chief reason for the very general belief that the success of the rebellion would mean the wider opening of China to the West was, of course, the reported Christian character of the movement. On this point there was certainly a great deal of exaggerated optimism, but there was also much doubt and even scepticism apparent in early comments in England. An anonymous History of Christian Missions and of the Present Insurrection, one of a number of popular accounts of the rebellion published during 1853-4, was confident that the genius of Christianity had "at length penetrated the very heart of the oldest empire in the world; and the 'flowery land' is succumbing to its all pervading influence". It went on to describe how "a small band of Protestant Missionaries, with the Bible in hand and clothed in the armour of Truth, succeeded in penetrating into the very heart of the country, and laying prostrate the superstition and idolatry of five thousand years".[2] The Standard rejoiced in the

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(1) Blackwoods Magazine Jan.1854, p.72.

(2) (Anon.) The History of the Christian Missions and of the Present Insurrection (1853) pp v-vi. Like The Chinese Revolution noted above, this is partly put together from newspaper editorials.

Protestantism of the rebels, and dismissed charges that their leaders practised polygamy themselves and condoned it among their followers. "This we do not believe of any Protestant, though we can easily understand how difficult it may be to prevail upon the newly converted polygamists to put away all their supernumary wives". Some deviations in doctrine and teaching were to be expected, but it was enough that "the Holy work of bringing three hundred millions of human beings to (Christian) light has been auspiciously commenced".(1) The British Journal also thought that Taiping religious publications breathed "the purest Christian philanthropy", excepting only the punishment of death imposed for looking on Hung's harem.(2) Polygamy or not, some were very ready to be convinced that the rebels were true Christians. The character of the revolution in China was "that of a Christian, liberal, progressive movement against the savage, cruel lop-sided despotism of the Mantchus", The Eastern Star concluded, after giving a highly romantic account of the introduction of Christianity into China.(3)

Such views were certainly very widespread, especially among supporters of missionary societies, but against them

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(1) Standard July 30, 1853.
(2) The British Journal Oct.1853, pp 290-1.
(3) Eastern Star July 30,1853 (L.M.S. Newspaper Cuttings on China, Vol.I pp.29-30).

may be set many more critical and rational comments. The Times felt that "although the foundation of their faith may be Christian, there is nothing to show that the superstructure is not as extravagant a superstition as Mormonism itself, and, as we have seen, they proselytize by massacre as much as by faith".(1) John Oxenford, the translator of Callery and Yvan's History of the Insurrection in China which became the basis of many other early accounts, put the emphasis differently and judged that the rebels were "orthodox Confucians with a superstructure of spurious Christianity".(2) Either way, they were far from being seen as propagators of a "pure" Christian faith. The Daily News, even while presenting the rebellion as the commencement of great moral and intellectual changes in China, emphasised that Taiping Christianity was "defiled by the admixture of much that is degrading and superstitious", and the Spectator, in an article entitled "Christianity à la Chinoise", felt that it was natural that the purposes of the rebels "should be vague and therefore incapable of communication, even still more natural that their Christianity should not be that of England or of Rome, but of Quantung and Shanghae".(3) Fraser's Magazine,

(1) The Times Aug.2, 1853.
(2) Callery & Yvan, History of the Insurrection in China (1853), p.312 - translated, with a supplementary chapter, by J.Oxenford.
(3) Daily News Sept. 19, 1853, and Spectator Aug.13, 1853.

reviewing Callery and Yvan's work, concluded that, "while we gladly welcome their awakening from idolatry, we cannot but fear that the Chinese reformers are still far from Christian", adding that "of the ultimate success of the insurrection there seems to be little doubt".(1) Finally, in one of the most judicious of the articles on the rebellion which appeared during 1853, the Quarterly Review argued that it was far from impossible that the rebels would yet receive a check, while

> "of the disposition of the people at large towards the new creed we know absolutely nothing. All ordinary experience is against their throwing up their ancient superstitions at the mere bidding of an army who are but a handful of the vast population, and if the rebels win the prize it is no unlikely alternative that they will compromise their creed to consolidate the throne".(2)

Critical and balanced comments on the religious aspect of the rebellion were by no means lacking in 1853, therefore, although since they mainly appeared in the more serious political and literary journals they certainly did not dispel more fervent and uncritical hopes.

The view that the rebellion was essentially a political rather than a religious movement, suggested by the Quarterly

(1) Fraser's Magazine Nov.1853, p.606.
(2) Quarterly Review Dec.1853, p.193.

Review and others, was argued most strongly by John Kesson in a work called The Cross and the Dragon. Basing his argument largely on the evident weakness of the Christian missions in China, Kesson maintained that the rebellion could be "but feebly charged with the spiritual element". Its real strength came from the secret societies and it was, in that sense, a rebellion in traditional Chinese style, "only a repetition of phenomena that have startled and annoyed the governments of the empire of China, at various periods, during the last two centuries".(1) But even as a political movement the rebellion won general approval in England at that time, and there were none to argue, as there were in China, in favour of British intervention. The rebels soon became "the patriots", and the likelihood of their rapid success in overthrowing the Manchus was rarely questioned.

> "The progress of the Chinese rebels, or rather of the 'patriot army' as it is now called by our Eastern informants, continues as wonderful as ever", The Times noted in mid August. "To us, of course, nothing can be so intelligible as that a nation should suddenly throw off the authority of an alien and a hated race. The wonder was," it added, confidently changing tense, "how the Manchus had held China so long".(2)

(1) J. Kesson, The Cross and the Dragon (1854) esp. Preface and pp.238-41.

(2) The Times Aug.15,1853; also May 20,1853.

The rebellion was praised not only as a national revolt but as a movement of resistance to oppression, Charles Macfarlane almost applying the Whig interpretation of history to China in his book The Chinese Revolution. "The political principles put forth by the partisans seem to have been conceived in an English or Anglo-American spirit," he judged, and from the reports received the rebel government at Nanking seemed to be "impressed and permeated with European ideas, and is such a form of government as never yet originated in an Asiatic mind".(1)

Any possible social origins or objectives to the rebellion were rarely suggested in these early British accounts of it, in strong contrast to the emphasis in modern works. "From the commencement of this strange chapter of history, we have anxiously asked what is the present nature of the rebellion in China", stated the Morning Post. "Is it a social, a political or a religious movement? It appears to be a combination of all three". The emphasis, however, was all upon the political and religious character of the movement, even its possible commercial results receiving, for the time, rather less emphasis than one would expect. The Morning Post thought that, "in a mere commercial point of view - as a question of money and trade - it is difficult

(1) C.MacFarlane, The Chinese Revolution (1853) pp;35.208, etc.

to say how important the results of the struggle may be".[1] For the Economist it appeared to be "on the whole a great social change, though ostensibly assuming the form of a change in the dynasty". What was of greatest concern to the Economist was its possible effect on trade, and on this point the future prospects were encouraging, despite a probable temporary drop in British imports.[2] The New Monthly Magazine became almost rapturous at its vision of trade in China "once opened to civilisation". "What an outlet for manufactured goods, from broadcloth to glass, does this dense population lay open!" it exclaimed, and saw the rivers of China "covered with steamboats" and great new fields for the scientist and the tourist, as for the trader and the missionary.[3] The Times put the benefits to be looked for in a strictly respectable order, feeling that there was

> "great reason to believe that the successful progress of this insurrection, if it be not put down, will be favourable to many of the first interests of humanity and civilisation. We may hope that it will extend the blessings of Christianity, and that it will at least insure toleration to the teachers of a purer creed.

(1) Morning Post Aug. 30, 1853.
(2) Economist April 30 and May 21, 1853.
(3) New Monthly Magazine Sept-Dec.1853, pp196-8; cf.also Calcutta Review cit. above p264fn(1)

"It has long been seen that the obstacles to unrestricted freedom of trade with China lay principally, if not entirely, in the jealous policy of the Government, and there is reason to suppose that, if a new dynasty be established over any considerable portion of the empire, our trade will be extended far beyond the five ports reluctantly opened to Europeans by the treaty of 1843." (1)

In short, whether from China's point of view or the world's at large, the Taiping rebellion was unquestionably a good thing.

The interest aroused in England by the success of the Taiping rebels in 1853 was certainly very considerable, but should not be exaggerated. News of the capture of Nanking reached England at the beginning of May, at a time when there was a crisis in relations with Russia over the Middle East, and the prospect of war with another great European power was of far more moment than strange revolutions in distant China. The receipt of Bonham's report in August and the temporary passing of the Middle Eastern crisis provoked more comment in newspapers and journals for a time, but so little was certainly known, it was all so far away, and England was so soon again facing the prospect of war with Russia, that the

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(1) The Times Aug.2, 1853.

rebellion could be little more than a nine days wonder. It is apparent that public reaction in England was more completely unanimous in its approval than was the case among British residents in China, but some signs of a reaction appeared even before the end of 1853. "With the progress of the Chinese rebellion a doubt also makes progress as to what may be the effect of that movement on the ethics of the empire, commercial as well as religious", observed the Spectator at the end of October, noting possible difficulties over their religious pretensions, the opium trade, and the general state of corruption and disruption in China, which might well end in the establishment of "bandit adventurers" in the seat of government. "There appears, therefore," it concluded, "good reason in those who look forward with some anxiety to the course hereafter".(1) In November Fraser's Magazine feared "that the first impressions respecting the character of the insurgents have been too favourable", while in December the Quarterly Review concluded that, "with the very limited information we possess, the conclusions that have been formed of the ultimate issue of the rebellion appear over sanguine and hasty".(2) The highly favourable, optimistic first reaction remained for some time yet the prevailing one

(1) Spectator Oct.22, 1853.
(2) Fraser's Magazine Nov.1853, p.605 and Quarterly Review Dec.1853, p.193.

in England, The Times at the beginning of 1854 still feeling that "there can be no doubt that the total change of institutions contingent upon the rebellion will communicate a new tone to the foreign policy of the (Chinese) Government".(1) But the size of the question mark over the rebellion was growing rather than diminishing by the end of 1853.

During 1854 there was a considerable falling away of public interest in England in the rebellion, and to some extent also of optimism about it. Whereas The Athenaeum, reviewing Oxenford's translation of Callery and Yvan in September, 1853, could say with confidence that the book "could hardly fail to find a curious and interested public", by June, 1854, its comment upon Gillespie's Land of Sinim was that "public attention has naturally been diverted from the progress of the insurrection in China by the war with Russia".(2) By July the Daily News could scarcely believe that the rebellion would

> "produce any immediate great change in the manners, the religion or the civil institutions of a people who for five and twenty centuries have undergone little material alteration..... As to the protestant Christianity which some over sanguine parties had imagined was quickly to enlighten the darkness of China, as our readers are aware, we cannot believe in its probability, knowing the

(1) The Times Jan.14, 1854.
(2) Athenaeum 1853, pp.1059-60 and 1854,p.715.

"Chinese to be sensuous and obdurate idolaters, and remembering that thousands had for whole centuries lived under Christian rule and mized with Christians, impenetrable to any religion more rational than that of Fo or Confucius".

Reports of Medhurst's and Lewin Bowring's trip to Nanking in June tended to confirm such doubts, although The Times for the present maintained its charitable view of the movement, in contrast to its later extreme hostility.

"That the Chinese have imbibed anything like the spirit of true Christianity it is impossible to believe", it stated, "but we do not know that their errors are worse than were to be anticipated from what appears to have been a total absence of instruction..... There is no necessity for hastily despairing of Chinese Christianity, or concluding that the Divine doctrines of the Gospels have been deliberately depraved for any purpose of men... It will, probably, be long before this extraordinary revolution is consummated, but we do not see that the hopes entertained of the eventual conversion of China need be despondingly abandoned".(1)

(1) The Times Sept.20, 1854; cf. The Christian Times Sept.29, 1854. E.G.Fishbourne Impressions of China (1855), noted further below, was at some pains (ch.6.) to answer the objections raised after the visit of the 'Rattler' and 'Styx'.

But apart from periodical reports on developments in China, papers and journals in England carried increasingly rare comments upon the rebellion. "Intelligence from China is of the old kind", the Spectator reported in December, 1854. "The rebels have failed before Canton, and trade was reviving. At Shanghai they were becoming demoralized; from Nankin and Pekin there was no news". It was not long before the wits were complaining that China, like Uranus, was slow to make a revolution.(1)

Hopes in the rebellion and its effect upon China certainly did not at once disappear, however. An article in the Edinburgh Review for April, 1855, prompted by the appearance of an English translation of Huc's Travels in China, stated that

> "Revolution has occurred, and the ultimate auguries are assuredly bright, whether its immediate course be prosperous or adverse, whether it lead to the quiet establishment, at a comparatively early period, of a new and renovated empire in which Christian and European ideas shall be predominant, or whether an epoch of political anarchy and religious fanaticism be destined first to intervene. One thing is tolerably certain; the exclusive and jealously-barred system of the ancient

(1) Spectator Dec. 2,1854 and Blackwood's Magazine May,1856 p.502.

> "empire is effectively broken up; China is at length open, in the most effectual sense of the word; into it the elements of light, civilisation and Christianity will continue to flow".(1)

A few months later the British Quarterly Review, in an article based on Fishbourne's recently published Impressions of China, expressed the conviction that Hung's trances were the result of "a childish simplicity, a harmless quietism". The real marvel was not the amount of error but of truth in the movement. "In our solicitude for the better government and the better faith of China, our hope turns towards Nankin, notwithstanding all the error and false pretension set forth there by the Eastern King".(2)

Fishbourne, who was an active supporter of the Protestant missions in China, argued especially against any foreign interference in the struggle, and while describing Yang as "a deceiver, the Judas of the party", reaffirmed his faith in the religious worth of the movement as a whole. For Fishbourne, as indeed for many other sympathisers with the Taipings, it was what he conceived to be their remarkable un-Chineseness which was especially praiseworthy.

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(1) Edinburgh Review, April 1855, p.441

(2) The British Quarterly Review, July 1855, pp.128, 131 etc.

"They are most frank in their manner, quite unlike what we are accustomed to in Chinese..... It was obvious to the commonest observer that they were practically a different race..... The quiet self possession of the leaders we came in contact with was quite un-Chinese".(1)

The less Chinese the more to be admired, seems to be the view behind these judgments. It required a conscious effort for most English observers of that day to recognise, as The Times magnanimously did a few years later, that "these Chinamen have their civilisation, their affections, even their virtues".(2) But Fishbourne's book was not everywhere received so uncritically as by the British Quarterly Review. The Athenaeum, while still calling the rebellion "that wonderful movement", believed that he accepted "too credulously the best interpretation of events", while the Spectator thought the book based on "the groundless hopes and headlong reasonings of a sanguine man engaged in riding a hobby", observing of the rebels that it appeared that "their arrogance and self-sufficiency are quite as great as those of the present Tartar rulers, with the notion of a religious superiority added".(3) Rutherford Alcock, in an article in the Bombay Quarterly

(1) E.G.Fishbourne, op.cit., pp180-4; Fishbourne was on the General Committee of the Chinese Evangelization Society (see Chinese Missionary Gleaner May 1855,p.192 and June 1858, p.73) and wasthe author of a number of devotional works.
(2) The Times Dec.12, 1862.
(3) Athenaeum 1855, pp971-2 and Spectator March 31,1855.

Review in October, 1855, described Fishbourne as a "shallow enthusiast", and took his book as the starting point for questioning the value of the Protestant missions' work in China. As being carried out, he believed it to be "a vast waste of money and time", and was strongly of the opinion that "the whole work is yet to do.". Certainly the Taipings had not advanced it, whatever Fishbourne said.(1)

By 1856 it was becoming necessary to remind people in England of the continuance of rebellion in China. "We have almost forgotten China as a theatre of civil war", the Manchester Examiner and Times stated in October of that year, going on to insist that the Chinese rebellion was really of greater significance than "movements of inferior importance nearer home", such as those of Kossuth, Garibaldi and Louis Napoleon.(2) These unusual reflections were the result of the publication in England of a letter from an American missionary, W. A. P. Martin, urging the American government not to give any active support to the Manchus, an object with which the Examiner and Times fully sympathised, while giving Martin "the full benefit of the rather large balance which he has struck in favour of the insurgent party". This letter also led the Daily News to comment again that

(1) Bombay Quarterly Review Oct.1855, pp234-5
(2) Manchester Examiner and Times, Oct.7, 1856 (in L.M.S. Newspaper Cuttings on China, vol I p154; cf also Scottish Guardian Sept. 23,1856, ibid, p.152).

> "the interests of the Western world are far more identified with the success of the revolution than with the perpetuation of the effete dynasty of the Mantchoos, and the worn out type of the old civilisation..... In the end we can feel little doubt that the insurgent cause is destined to prevail, while it is absolutely certain that the true policy of the nations of the West is not only to abstain from all armed intervention on either side, but especially to avoid giving any indirect countenance or support to that barbaric dynasty whose rule of government has long been a standing insult to the outer world, and is now regarded as an intolerable burden by the best and most advanced of the Chinese themselves".(1)

But public interest in China was stirred about this time, not by the rebellion but by events at Canton which led to the outbreak of war. The Times, which in 1853 had welcomed the Taipings as the probable means whereby "that huge, strange looking, amphibious hulk of antiquity - China" would be unmoored and brought into the main stream of world civilisation, now looked to Englishmen to perform that task.(2)

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(1) Daily News Oct. 6, 1856 (ibid pp 155-7).

(2) The Times Jan. 19, 1858

Towards the end of 1856 Meadows' book The Chinese and their Rebellions appeared. The extent to which public interest in the Taiping rebellion had receded by this time is reflected in the reviews which this work received at the time of publication. Apart from Meadows' involved style and poor organisation of his ideas, what chiefly aroused the interest and comment of reviewers was his exposition of the principles underlying Chinese philosophy. This was a new theme, and certainly a major part of Meadows' book; but his sympathetic account of "the politico-religious rebellion" of the Taipings, which included some very perceptive observations on the economic and social content of the movement and was by far the most searching analysis of it that had then appeared, was much less remarked upon. The Times, indeed, in a review spread over more than three columns, was chiefly delighted and amused by the idea that here at last was a spokesman for the superior virtues of Chinese civilisation. "According to our loose barbarian notions the Chinese Empire is an overgrown anomaly", its reviewer began. ".....Let the barbarians, meaning the British, henceforth perform the kotow with their faces towards the direction of Pekin, for their interpreter has come to the Flowery Land, and has been enlightened as to the inferiority of his countrymen". Meadows'

book, it was suggested, corresponded with its subject in a variety of ways. "It is studious and accurate, like the products of Chinese penmanship; it is quaintly luminous, like a Chinese lantern; it is as destitute of proportion as a Chinese picture; and it is quite as involved as a Chinese puzzle". The idea that thought or civilisation in China had much advanced over the past two thousand years was completely rejected. "The geological transformation of the earth's surface affords a fair parallel to Chinese advancement. Coal is made quicker than Chinese ethics, and continents grow while their philosophers sleep". Certainly the Taipings were not presented as being now likely to hasten the process. They received but one brief mention at the end of the review, Meadows being commended as their "worthy historian".(1)

In the Eclectic Review also, it was Meadows' account of Chinese philosophy which was of chief interest, though it was observed that he "elucidated"the revolt, and his arguments against foreign intervention were briefly commended.(2) The Athenaeum gave much the same emphasis, though with a little more weight on the arguments against interference. "If the Taepings are worthy to be free they will doubtless achieve their own freedom", this reviewer commented, after a lengthy

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(1) The Times Dec. 29, 1856, p.10.

(2) Eclectic Review Dec.1856, pp 550-60.

summary of the "metaphysical jargon" in which Meadows presented his account of Chinese philosophy.(1) Some years later, in January 1860, a writer in the Quarterly Review described Meadows' book as "the production of a highly educated gentleman whose brain is somewhat befogged with German mysticism; he gives much interesting information, though it is unhappily buried amongst a mass of erroneous conclusions and learned nothingness". This writer went on to attack Meadows' views on the virtues of competitive examination in recruiting the civil service, but said nothing of his views on the rebels.(2)

Two other books which appeared about this time and which, unlike Meadows', were favourable to the Imperialists rather than to the rebels, were those of the botanist, Robert Fortune, and of Sir John Davis, who had been Superintendent of British trade in China from 1844 to 1848. Fortune was very critical of the pro-rebel sentiment he had observed among foreigners at Shanghai in 1853, though for the time he suspended judgment on the rebels at Nanking. Davis was frankly hostile to the Taipings and, after noting Meadows' "curious work", judged himself that "they were no more like Christians than Mahomet was like a Jew; and the hopes

(1) Athenaeum 1856, pp 771-2.

(2) Quarterly Review Jan.1860 p.107.

which were at first raised by their success as Christians were very soon succeeded by dismay and disgust at their blasphemy as impostors".(1)

During most of the period of the war with the Manchus there were few comments and only occasional reports on the rebellion in China. The account of Elgin's voyage to Hankow reached England in March, 1859, and prompted The Times to refer to what it now called "the canker which lies at the heart of China".(2) But although it was noted that the rebels presented an obstacle to the development of trade in the interior, there was no immediate call for a campaign to exterminate them. Nevertheless, public faith in the movement had certainly much diminished by this time. In a lecture to the British Association in September, 1859, Bowring argued that the prohibition of the opium trade would really be a considerable disservice to China, since it would mean that land now used to raise food crops would be turned over to the poppy. In reply to a question on the rebellion Bowring repeated the kind of views he had expressed in official despatches, saying that the Taipings were ignorant, lived solely on plunder and had no popular support in China.

(1) R.Fortune, A Residence Among the Chinese....1853-6 (1857) pp 17-21, 118-28 and J.F.Davis, China...1857, vol II pp 412-13.

(2) The Times March 3, 1859.

The reaction to his views is the interesting point here, for though his remarks on the opium question aroused "considerable dissent", according to the London and China Express report,(1) those on the rebellion were received "with great satisfaction".

Bowring was probably the author of an article which appeared in the Cornhill Magazine in January, 1860, in which it was argued that there was now nothing to be hoped for from the rebellion. "It has become little better than dacoity; its progress has been everywhere marked by wreck and ruin; it destroys cities but builds none..... We cannot afford to overthrow the government of China", the article concluded. "Bad as it is, anarchy will track its downfall, and the few elements of order which yet remain will be whelmed in a convulsive desolation".(2) Against these views may be set those in an article which appeared in the previous month in the New Monthly Magazine. The writer of this, while not suggesting that the allied armies should set out to overthrow the Manchus entirely, argued that the rebels "have still some redeeming points about them.... There cannot be a question but that, with all their faults, they present the best material with which to work out the regeneration of China".(3) The

(1) London and China Express Sept.26.;859 pp489-90 and Oct.10, 1859, p507; cf The Times Sept.23,1859, p.5.
(2) Cornhill Magazine Jan.1860, p.43; J.Scarth, Twelve Years in China p 278, says the article was attributed to Bowring.
(3) New Monthly Magazine Dec.1859, p.393.

prevailing view, however, if one may use so positive a word of a situation in which the chief feature is the absence of views, seems to have become that the rebels offered, at best, little or no improvement on the corrupt and unreliable Manchus.

The action of the Manchu government in renewing the war in 1859, and its seizure of the truce emissaries in September, 1860, naturally provoked a strong reaction against it in England.

> "We have no need to be tender of this corrupt old dynasty which is hateful to the people", asserted the Spectator in an article entitled "More Chinese Duplicity". "It has never respected anything but force, whether displayed by Chinese rebels or European armies, and we should achieve a great thing if we can bind it down to terms and force it to observe them".(1)

In August, 1860, The Times argued strongly against any intervention on behalf of the Manchus against the rebellion, and insisted that it would be "a scandal to humanity if, in face of the facts before us, the policy of the Empire should be diverted from the pursuit of our own plain rights and interests in order to sustain a despotism so faith-less, so feeble and so dreadful in its effects as this".(2)

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(1) Spectator Nov.17, 1860.

(2) The Times, Aug.13, 1860.

Condemnation of the Manchus did not, however, imply a positive reaction in favour of the rebels. Since they helped weaken resistance to the allied armies in the north the Taipings were "in a certain sense our allies", the Morning Post noted, but it also warned that "it would not be policy to shake the Chinese Government in such a degree that it could itself make no head against the rebels", who were "greater barbarians than the constituted authorities of China".(1)

> "Generally speaking, when the population of a country is split into two factions, an invading force would be disposed to coalesce with one of them", said The Times in a leader on the repulse of the rebels from Shanghai, "but the politics of China resemble the zoology of Australia, and exhibit an inversion of all ordinary rules... By this time" it added, "even the most sanguine of our countrymen in China have discovered the falsity of the character originally attributed to the rebellion. It is based neither upon religion nor patriotism".(2)

Nevertheless, the question "who are these Taipings?" which had often been asked "in a spirit of listless curiosity", was becoming one of some real political importance, The Times

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(1) Morning Post Oct.1, Nov.3 and 12, 1860.

(2) The Times Nov.16, 1860.

continued a month later. But until more was certainly known, England should remain neutral between them and the Manchus, defending only her proper rights in the treaty ports. "Whether Tartar or Ming (i.e. Taiping) shall sit upon the throne of China is no business of ours; and, so far as we can judge from the known facts, is not of great consequence to the people themselves".(1) By the time the Treaty of Tientsin was finally ratified there was no strong current of popular support for the rebellion; but equally there was no demand for action against it. There was too much distrust of the Manchus for that.

This remained the general pattern of opinion during most of 1861. Even the London and China Express, which had no sympathy whatever for the rebel cause, argued that as things were, with the Taipings renewed in strength and in control of much of the Yangtze valley, "it would be injurious to the commercial interests of England to swerve in the slightest degree from the strictly neutral attitude we have assumed".(2) The Times continued to hold to the view that, although the rebels were desperadoes and robbers, it was not England's work to suppress them - "we might as well undertake to police Europe" - so long as they did not threaten trade.

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(1) The Times Dec. 12, 1860 and Jan.16, 1861.
(2) London and China Express June 10, 1861; also April 10.

At the same time it argued strongly that England's interest in China would be best advanced by strengthening the Manchus. In a leader that was practically a statement of official British policy at this stage The Times said on May 30,

> "We never had a greater risk at stake than that which is now put upon us by these Chinese rebels, who have seated themselves upon the great river up which we desire to go, and who are periodically plundering the cities with which we desire to trade. As far as the interests of humanity are concerned, no greater service could be rendered to the race of man than to rout out these Taiping robbers. This, however, for a hundred reasons we as a nation must not do. It is not our work. But we are not therefore to suffer and do nothing. This is a matter for diplomatic action. If Mr. Bruce should find that anything like a civilized Power is to be made out of these Taipings - well; if not, the Tartar Government has already had experience of the benefit to be derived from European supervision in the collection of their Customs, and it is not, perhaps, quite impossible that they might be inclined to listen to European advice as to the means of restoring peace in China. The Tartars are keeping faith with us, and it is our interest that they should be strong".

A few days later it was approving the result of a debate in the House of Commons in which members were "happily and wisely unanimous in their advice to do nothing".(1)

In the course of that debate Russell, who was soon to move into the House of Lords, stated that he would not deny that "some of the local (British) authorities may show some bias on one side or the other, but the Government at home, as well as the chief authorities in China, are desirous of observing a strict neutrality". Save for one speaker, who regretted that a single regiment and a few Armstrong guns could not be sent to finish off the rebellion, which was the work of "a set of scoundrels", all speakers supported the principle of neutrality, although some questioned the way in which it was being applied in China, especially to the Customs service.(2) In the Lords, Earl Grey also urged upon the government of the wisdom of continued neutrality, warning that rebellion was the safety valve of the Chinese political system, "holding much the same place in their institutions as the power of refusing Supply in our own Parliamentary history".(3) For the time there was virtually unanimous agreement that neutrality was the proper policy to follow

(1) See The Times May 30 and June 3, 1861,; cf.also March 30 and May 13.
(2) For this debate see P.D.vol 163 (1861) cols.379-406.
(3) P.D.vol 161 (1861) cols 546-69.

towards the rebellion.

Less unanimous was opinion on the character of the rebellion. Under the influence of favourable missionary reports there was some tendency in the middle of 1861 towards a sympathetic view again, although not to anything like the extent of 1853. "That stratum of society - a very large one - which derives its information from religious periodicals, begins to be again permeated with accounts of the great Chinese movement", the Spectator noted in an article published in April entitled "The Truth about the Taepings". After summarising what it conceived to be the changes in the public opinion since 1853 from "rapturous credulity" through annoyance at finding it had believed too much to the extreme reaction that the Taipings were "criminals unworthy of anything but the rope", the Spectator saw evidence of another swing back towards recognising some virtues in the movement. It went on itself to give a fairly favourable picture, based on missionary reports. "A great intellectual movement of some kind is taking place among the largest section of human beings", it suggested, and although it was clear that the rebels were not really Christians, yet "neither are they a gang of mere marauders of unintelligible tenets and villainous cruelty". Under Taiping rule considerable reforms were being implemented, including the prohibition of opium smoking, the setting up

of institutions for the poor, the denunciation of bribery and of idleness,"the rich being compelled to work six hours a day", and above all the encouragement of respect to foreigners. The ancient system of China was breaking up, and ideas at least as opposed to the philosophy of Confucius as to Christianity were permeating that "apparently immoveable mass". In short "change has begun in the only region where change ten years ago seemed impossible."(1) This kind of favourable view of the movement was echoed in articles in one or two other journals about this time, but their authors felt it necessary to take the offensive against what they plainly felt to be the prevailing popular view.(2) The ready assumption behind much of the comment made in 1853, that here was a wonderful reforming and progressive movement, had to be asserted and proved by 1861. By the early months of 1862, with the falling away of missionary hopes once more and the publication of further Blue Books containing many official reports on the rebellion, there were few ready to raise their voices in praise of the Taipings. There were plenty, however, who were ready to do so in condemnation of the change in government policy towards them.

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(1) Spectator April 13, 1861
(2) See for example, Dublin University Magazine May 1861; British Quarterly Review April, 1861, and London Quarterly Review, April 1861.

The question of policy towards the rebellion in China was the subject of frequent though not very stirring debate in parliament between 1862 and 1864. Apart from questions, the issue was raised seven times in the Commons and twice in the Lords between March, 1862, and May, 1864, and altogether received more attention than a comparable issue would be likely to get today. The main, indeed the only spokesman for the superior virtues of the rebels over the Manchus was the member for Aberdeen, Col. W. H. Sykes, who in speeches, pamphlets and letters to the press consistently presented them as "the National Party" who were in effective control of a third of China.(1)

> "If the Taepings were the desolating locusts they were represented to be," he stated in the Commons in March, 1862, "it was a singular fact that during the time they have held Nankin the silk and tea produce has shown considerable annual increase. The Taepings, unfortunately for themselves, were Reformers and Puritans - they professed to be eradicators of idolatry and also of their Tartar conquerors. They also had a religious ordinance which denounced the use of opium and of liquor, and in Nankin and the other cities they

(1) See W.H.Sykes, The Taeping Rebellion in China (1863), which includes many of his letters to the press; for letters of Sykes to the F.O. on such issues as Harvey's reports from Ningpo and Manchu atrocities against Taiping prisoners see F.O.17/382,400,402,404; on his argument that the Taiping rebels controlled an area of 400,000 sq.m. and that, with other rebellions, two-thirds of China was out of Manchu control see A & P 1863 (3104) pp18-19, 143-5.

> "captured, neither opium nor spirits were permitted, and the traffickers in opium and liquor found that those customs were an obstacle to what they considered progress, and he was much afraid that much of the hostile feeling to the Taepings was caused by selfish views. He was not their advocate, but he was the advocate of an honest adherence to our professions of neutrality; for in case we interfered between the belligerents, we must have another Chinese war".(1)

Sykes found many supporters in the Commons, but not for his view of the rebels as "Reformers and Puritans". Lord Naas, for example, another leading critic of government policy, regarded Taiping religion as "sheer imposture", and agreed that they had shown no capacity for establishing a dynasty or creating a firm government in China.(2) The real debate was over whether it was advisable or necessary to British interests to support the Manchus actively.

The arguments advanced in parliament against this policy were diverse.(3) One, already sufficiently illustrated, was

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(1) P.D.vol 165 (1862) col.1806.
(2) P.D. vol 172 (1863) col. 264.
(3) For the debates summarised here see P.D.vol.165 (1862) cols. 1802-19; vol.168 (1862) cols.29-81 and 882-901; vol.170(1863) cols.1783-1803; vol.172(1863) cols.270-329; vol.173 (1864) cols.441-52; vol.174 (1864) cols.1505-23 and vol.175 (1864) cols.527-45 and 916-80.

that it was not only unnecessary but probably harmful to the future of British Trade in China. Any government led by Palmerston was also naturally suspected of being ready to advance the flag and to annex territory or to establish a protectorate wherever the opportunity arose. Even if not accused of actually planning imperial expansion in China, it was warned that this was a too probable outcome of its policy. "What has happened in India is certain to happen in China if we persist in our present course", said Lord Naas, and there were many to agree with him and, at this stage in British imperial history, none to advocate the desirability of another India. Even if this danger were avoided, it would be a policy involving much expense. The merchant James White "had no sympathy with the Taepings, but he had an earnest sympathy with the taxpayer of this country who would, no doubt, be called upon to defray the cost of (a) gigantic scheme of interference". The maintenance of the present force in China cost £1,000,000 per annum, complained another speaker, "which amounted to an additional penny on the income tax". In the House of Lords Earl Grey criticised the government for lacking any clear and consistent policy at all, for being neither properly neutral nor properly at war with the rebels, while there was also criticism of a policy which gave support to a corrupt, despotic and untrustworthy government. But the main point made, apart

from the danger of becoming deeply involved in the internal government of China, was that British trade there did not need, nor did its volume justify, the committments the government was making. Cobden and Bright both advanced this kind of argument in speeches which hardly mentioned the rebels, but which insisted that the trade with China - "the most miserable trade in the world when compared with the magnitude of the population", said Bright - would best develop by being left to make its own way. Wars in China had been and were unnecessary to its advancement.(1)

The government's main answer to these criticisms was, of course, to insist that the rebellion was a completely destructive force. Unless China was to be allowed to drift into a state of anarchy in which there would be no prospects whatever for trade, it had to be put down, and it was sound policy to help "the enlightened Government of China", which Palmerston described as having been "rendered" friendly instead of hostile to the West, to do this. But there was no intention of undertaking more than limited intervention, which in any case the Taipings had brought upon themselves by their attacks upon the treaty ports. The warning analogy of India was simply rejected. Palmerston, who seems to have taken a

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(1) For Cobden's arguments see vol.168, cols.63-7, and vol.175 cols.914-23, and for Bright, ibid., cols.974-9.

rather light hearted view of the whole issue, answered Cobden's general attack upon the past and present China policy of the government with the argument that, having weakened the Manchus and helped create favourable conditions for rebellion against them by defeating them in war,

> "then, on the principle that there is a just Providence which inflicts retribution upon those who commit wrong and refuse redress, we are bound now to do everything in our power to make amends to that Imperial Government for the injury they then sustained....."(1)

The following speaker observed that Palmerston had spoken "with even more than his usual hilarity and vivacity", while the Spectator described this speech as containing "nothing less than an assertion of his own will, and his intention to persevere in a particular policy whether the country likes it or not..... It was a hilarious song of defiance, heard with disgust even by members who feel that the alternatives are Lord Palmerston or a Tory administration".(2)

It is plain that this was not an issue upon which the Palmerston government felt very seriously challenged. Certainly there was no sense of urgency about these fairly frequent

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(1) P.D.vol.168, cols.71-8; for other, more serious, examples of this "atonement" argument to justify aid to the Manchus see P.D.vol.161 (1861) col.579; A.E.Wilson, English Policy in China (1860) pp.28-9; London and China Express Jan 10, 1862, p.114.

(2) Spectator July 12,1862, p.762.

debates which, with one or two exceptions, were held before very thin and disinterested houses and which only once resulted in a division. Some of them, in fact, appear to have been begun as moves in the complicated game of parliamentary politics. In the absence of any great domestic issues of dispute, pending a new Reform Bill, foreign policy provided the chief opportunities for criticism of the government by the rather heterogeneous opposition of the time. According to the Manchester Guardian, ever since the "Arrow" war "the relations of this country with China have been eagerly watched for opportunities of tripping up the government by a coalition of opposing parties".(1) Division on this issue certainly ran across the not very well defined party lines of that time, but it is significant that of the one debate upon which a vote was taken, the Spectator wrote that "the startled Liberals" followed Palmerston into the lobby.(2) The Spectator also thought it heard "a low growl in their ranks, which bodes no good to the Premier", but the issue was never felt to be of such import, either by the leaders of the opposition or by Palmerston's own party, as to warrant an all out attack or a mutiny. The Times might assert, "we have almost as much material interest at stake

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(1) Manchester Guardian July 9, 1863.
(2) Spectator July 12, 1862, p.757.

in the battles between the Taepings and the Imperialists in China as we have in the contest between the Unionists and the Secessionists in America",[1] but the civil war in China was never looked on by the British public or parliament with as much concern and interest as that in America.

Nevertheless, policy towards it was for a time an issue of considerable public debate. By 1862 The Times itself was in full cry after the rebels, "the bloodthirsty and rapacious Taeping, the Thug of China, the desolator of cities, the provider of carrion to the wild dog, the pitiless exterminator, the useless butcher". Intervention in some shape or other against this "travelling anarchy" had become "indispensable to our position in China", and The Times gave whole hearted support to every aspect of government policy, even to the Lay-Osborn flotilla, which aroused the criticism of many of the usual supporters of intervention.[2] The Morning Post also gave steady support to the government, and

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(1) The Times, Dec. 12, 1862.
(2) See The Times editorials on Feb.26, March 11th, May 16, July 22 and 29, Aug. 9 and 15, Dec. 12, 1862; Jan.30, April 4, July 7 and 9, Nov.24, 1863; Jan 5 and 11, Feb. 16, April 23, Sept. 28, 1864. Note J.Scarth - "The Times is doing most harm, for it still abuses the rebels whenever it can and suppresses anything favourable to them, though in possession of authentic knowledge sent by its own correspondent at Hong Kong". (in Presbyterian Church of England's "Letters in Connection with the China Mission", Box II, 2, no.10, Nov.12, 1860).

dismissed the arguments of its parliamentary critics as "simply impracticable and impossible". Non-intervention as a general principle in foreign relations was only intelligible towards countries which had reached "a certain grade of political, moral and philosophical development". The U.S.A. was such a country, but China was not.(1) The Manchester Guardian agreed that it was "mere pedantry" to apply this principle to countries "which know nothing of international law and customs", and judged the policy of the British government to be "faithful, straightforward and friendly, and calculated to prove eminently advantageous both to China and Great Britain".(2)

Public opposition, however, was considerable. During the latter part of 1862, after the change in the government's policy had been made plain by debates in Parliament, a number of memorials were sent to the Foreign Office urging that British representatives in China be instructed "to withdraw as speedily as possible from this untimely intervention in Chinese affairs". They were all nearly identical in wording, and appear to have been the result of an organised campaign of public meetings. They came from as far apart as Cornwall and Glasgow (from the Society for the Promotion of Permanent

(1) Morning Post July 9 and 17, 1862; July 8, 1863.
(2) Manchester Guardian July 9, 1863.

and Universal Peace), and included one from Manchester bearing the signature of Thos. Bazley, an M.P. for the city and a former chairman of the Chamber of Commerce there. The chief argument used by these memorialists was "that, at this moment, when the shadow of a great calamity is facing our own country, it is especially incumbent on Her Majesty's Government to avoid committing the nation to another war in China which is sure, as our past experience of Chinese wars abundantly proves, to draw largely on our national resources". No judgment was passed on either side in the Chinese domestic struggle, only upon the impolicy of British interference in it. (1) Many of the memorialists no doubt felt, like the reviewer of Blakiston's Five Months on the Yangtze in The Athenaeum, that by this time the bubble about the Taipings had burst, and they were revealed "in all their hideousness", yet also that "if there is to be a regeneration of China, it must be the work of the natives themselves". (2)

It was this last idea that Lay set out to change in two articles which appeared in Blackwood's Magazine at the beginning

(1) For these memorials see F.O.17/383-5 and 402. There are about ten altogether, some with up to fifty signatures, others with one only on behalf of a group. Those from religious groups added "and to affect our moral and religious character"to the passage quoted. The reference to "the shadow of a great calamity" is presumably to the depression in the North of England resulting from the American Civil War.

(2) Athenaeum 1862, vol.II, pp.589-90.

of 1863. The Taiping rebellion was "the most appalling scourge that ever fell upon a nation", but since the country was "decidedly opposed to direct intervention", while to allow another power to do so and establish a protectorate in China would be dangerous to British interests, the best method of aiding and regenerating the country, Lay argued, was by "encouraging officers of character and respectability, subjects of European powers, to enter the service of the Chinese Government". As examples of this method the Foreign Inspectorate of Customs and the Lay-Osborn flotilla were commended to the British public.(1) But Lay had no great success in creating a public opinion favourable to his plans for China, and the Lay-Osborn flotilla remained one of the most roundly condemned aspects of British intervention in the civil war in China.

Strongest opposition to what it called "Lord Palmerston's clandestine war" came from the Daily News. In July, 1862, it attacked government policy in several leaders, in one of which it reprinted from the Times of India a particularly horrific eyewitness account of alleged Imperialist atrocities in the treatment of captured Taipings. This account prompted enquiries from the government, which seems to have felt more

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(1) See Blackwood's Magazine Jan.and Feb.1863, esp.pp 144-8.

vulnerable on the charge of condoning atrocity than on any other made on this issue.(1) The Daily News kept up its attacks, printing several letters from Sykes, but without itself directly praising the Taipings. "The best thing we can do is to take China as it is," it was still arguing in June, 1864, "and carry on the best trade we can with it, instead of attempting to create it anew in the hope of doing better. There are districts occupied by Imperialists and others by Taipings. We should bear ourselves as neutrals to both parties.....(and) give up the ambition of being in any degree responsible for the Government of China, and be content with doing as much trade as we can carry on, as traders and not as Anglo-Chinese politicians and partisans".(2)

Among other newspapers the Daily Telegraph suggested mediation as a possibility, while the Standard was inclined to take Metternich's view of revolt in Greece and advise that it be left to burn itself out beyond the pale of civilisation. The Liverpool Daily Post, while chiding the House of Commons for its apathy on the question and attacking the government for approving the "extraordinary conduct" of Rear Admiral Hope without first seeking parliamentary approval,

(1) See Daily News July 10, 12, 16 and 24, and Aug 7 and 11, 1862. On government enquiries about atrocities see above p.221(2)

(2) Daily News June 1, 1864; also July 7, 1863.

believed that the Taipings had "always shown themselves more willing than the Mandarin party to foster trade, (and) are in a position to offer far greater facilities and far greater rewards". The Manchester Daily Examiner felt "no doubt that, substantially, (China) is now divided into two de facto empires. Let us recognise both and do our best to trade with both..... At all events, let us not gradually commit our honour to the impossible task of resuscitating an empire which bears the stamp of inevitable decay....." The Morning Herald asked, in a nineteenth century brand of tabloid journalism, why England should "crusade to keep the Yellow Dwarf of modern times on his goblin throne? Why are we bound to cement up every crack in the obsolete willow pattern plate? ....China must take care of China".(1) Finally, the Spectator asked "What is the Mexican expedition which is now embarrassing France compared to a task like this? It is the very process by which we conquered India begun over again". England was in danger of blundering into the government of a third of the human race through "a war nobody ordered, or

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(1) For these comments see "Spirit of the Press" column in the London and China Express - March 26, June 10, Nov.10, 1862; May 27, 1863; Feb.26, 1864 etc.

"wanted, or pretends to understand". By July, 1863, however, in reporting "another totally useless Chinese debate", it was forced to admit that the current of opposition to Palmerston it had seen in mid-1862 had come to nothing. "The secret popular feeling is evidently that, if the Anglo-Chinese officers do not conquer China there is no harm done, and if they do, so much the better for trade".(1) So far as newspapers can be said to reveal overt popular feeling, however, it is safe to conclude that there was always considerable opposition to intervention in China, and this seems relevant in explaining the rather hasty withdrawal from that policy made by the government in 1864.(2)

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(1) Spectator, July 12, 1862, pp 672-3 and July 19,1862, pp785 and 792-3; Aug.2,1862; May 23 and July 11,1863.

(2) Bruce at least displayed some sensitivity to public opinion. He wrote to Hope on March 26,1862, "we must guard against the charge, however absurd, of being too ready to take the offensive against the Taepings, and I am therefore in favour of an attempt at negotiation, as soon as they have received a good lesson near Shanghai". (F.O.17/371 enc.3 in Bruce to Russell April 9,1862). On May 6,1864, he forwarded extracts from the North China Herald to Russell, hoping that "these statements, extracted from a newspaper, will produce some impression on those persons in England who appear to think that the accounts furnished by Her Majesty's agents and officers in China are biassed unfairly by a feeling of hostility to the Taepings. A little reflection would, however, render it evident to anyone that those who were called on to decide the course to be pursued in this question four years ago had every inducement to take the most favourable view of the insurrection and to have entered into relations with Nanking, had it been possible to do so consistently with our interests in China".

In all this debate on government policy between 1862 and 1864 there was not much discussion of the rebellion itself. Certainly the government's critics were not particularly concerned to defend the Taipings. In its review, at the end of 1862, of Brine's The Taeping Rebellion in China which it considered to be the most impartial and balanced study of the movement which had till then appeared, though perhaps too impartial and judicious, The Athenaeum observed that

> "the Taepings in the sight of England are angels or demons, honey or vitriol, civilisers or exterminators, just as we choose; for it is perfectly easy to cram dogmatism in abundance on either side from books, pamphlets, speeches and leading articles".(1)

The final disappointment of missionary hopes in the rebellion meant that, even by the time The Athenaeum was making this comment there were really few left in England who regarded the rebels with positive approval. In October, 1862, the Quarterly Review argued that intervention was an undertaking "more than Great Britain is at all disposed to sanction", and presented the rebels in moderately favourable terms, certainly as no worse than the Imperialists, and "more willing to

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(1) Athenaeum 1862, vol.II, pp658-60.

"encourage the approach of foreigners and in no way disposed to interfere with foreign commerce". The writer of this article also observed that of the social condition of the rebels very little was known, but missionary reports indicated that "to a certain extent at least they have a community of interests; with very few exceptions no one seemed to say aught of the things he possessed was his own".(1) Not many such comments on the social system of the rebels are to be found in contemporary British articles, but when distinguished as to some extent socialistic this rarely aroused any particular condemnation. It was too remote and primitive to warrant that. In July, 1863, a writer in The London Quarterly Review admitted a strong revulsion of feeling against the rebels, though himself maintaining that "the present antipathy is.....as unreasonable and absurd as was the former sympathy".(2) There was no swing of the pendulum back again in favour of the rebellion, however, and within a short time articles and leaders in praise of Gordon's exploits began to appear, and the legend that "the Taeping monster has been crushed by British skill and valour" began to take shape.(3)

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(1) Quarterly Review Oct.1862, esp. pp 523-4.
(2) London Quarterly Review July 1863, pp.326-7.
(3) London and China Express Oct.10, 1864,p.817. The legend apparently still flourishes. See C.Beatty His Country was the World (1954) p.30 etc; Lord Elton, General Gordon (1954) p.54, 87-8 etc. It is interesting to note that Gordon himself is said to have pronounced the Taiping cause lost before he ever assumed command of the Ever Victorious Army, but the comment of D.C.Boulger on this was that "no cause could

concluded at foot of next page....

British "public" opinion about the Taiping rebellion, then, insofar as it can be pinned down, can be summed up as shifting from early support for the rebels as liberal, Christian and for some even Protestant reformers, through indifference and a short lived, partial revival of interest and hope, to final rejection and condemnation, with the rider that there was widespread disapproval of the policy of active intervention against it. It seems altogether in keeping with the ignorance and uncertainties out of which this opinion was largely compounded that, no sooner were the rebels defeated at Nanking, than doubts began to be expressed as to whether this would be altogether a good thing for British interests in China.

> "We are not at all sure we ought to congratulate ourselves on the news", wrote The Standard, "With an enemy in the field against him, occupying a portion of his empire, threatening new conquests, a standing menace to his throne, the Emperor of China was wonderfully complaisant to the English, upon whom he relied for something more than sympathy in his troubles".(1)

Even The Times, which had called loudest for the destruction of the rebellion and which refused to "retract one word or

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continuing fn(3) from previous page... be pronounced irretrievable with a leader so expert and resolute as Chung Wang, and opponents so incapable and craven as his were". (The Life of Gordon (1896) vol I pp 75-6.)

(1) this page... cit. London and China Express Oct.10,1864 p.818.

"retreat one step" from the course of policy it had advocated, agreed that England might expect "to find the Chinese Government much less tractable". On December 31st, reviewing the events of 1864, it could only say that, with the defeat of the rebellion, "it remains to be seen whether the Government of Pekin will maintain the friendly bearing to Foreign Powers which has hitherto found a motive in the need of counsel and assistance".(1) The last fifty years of Manchu rule in China are sufficient comment on that.

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(1) The Times Dec. 30 and 31, 1864.

PART III: GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

C O N C L U S I O N

A great many generalisations and assumptions have been made about British attitudes and policy towards the Taiping rebellion in China. This thesis has endeavoured to make these explicit where necessary, and to test them against the detailed evidence provided by official and non-official British records. Such a process inevitably blurs and complicates what, from a more distant standpoint, may appear to be a clear cut and unmistakable pattern. The main lines of that pattern are certainly definite enough. British opinion about the Taiping rebellion moved from early general approval and support to later general disapproval and rejection, while the official British policy changed from early neutrality to later active intervention against the rebellion. But within this broad framework many points of quite significant detail, when seen at closer quarters than is possible in general histories of the rebellion or of British policy in China, take on a very different aspect from that generally attributed to them.

The main difference, in my view, is that there was no sudden, definite change, either in British attitudes or policy, at the end of the war of 1856-60 against the Manchu government. The significance of that war, and of the Treaty of Tientsin which resulted from it, in creating conditions in

which British interference in the civil war in China was a likely possibility cannot be denied. But it gives a quite false idea of the nature of British policy on this issue to assume that there was an immediate and unhesitating change to active support of the Manchus, once the Tientsin treaty was ratified. In a way it may seem a small point to insist that the real change came early in 1862, rather than at the end of 1860 or the beginning of 1861; but the common assumption that British intervention against the Taipings began almost as soon as the Manchus were brought to terms seems to me to nourish the more fundamentally mistaken assumption that British policy towards the rebellion was something carefully calculated and certain in its development. British intervention came about in a way which reveals a complete absence of any pre-conceived plan to help crush the rebellion. A readiness to help the Manchus in some way was certainly plain before 1862, but so long as the rebels stayed clear of the main centre of British trade in China at Shanghai there was no certainty that this would have resulted in more than a very pro-Manchu policy of neutrality.

It is important to recognise that in so distant a field as China was in the mid-nineteenth century, the simple sounding concept "British policy" was the result of a complex,

long drawn out process in which no one, sometimes least of all those in nominal but distant control of it, could be very sure of what exactly the end product would be. The short term influence of local officers and local events could sometimes be quite decisive, and British policy might, and often did, change in important if not quite fundamental ways, before the British government itself knew what was happening. So long as such locally inspired changes in British policy were not inconsistent with the main British objectives in China they were likely ultimately to receive higher approval. But in considering the historical development of that policy, changes which began at the local level, however logical and to-be-expected they may appear to the later historian, should not be presented as the result of plans well thought out beforehand and directed from above. The evidence of the official British records shows quite plainly that the change in British policy towards the Taiping rebellion certainly did not come about in such a fashion.

Nor did British opinion suddenly swing against the rebels as the result of the Treaty of Tientsin. In great part British hopes in the Taipings had evaporated long before 1860, even as early as the middle of 1854. Indeed, it seems to me that there has been some tendency to exaggerate the extent of the early favourable reaction to the rebellion. This was very marked, but it was far from being absolutely universal

or uncritical. Some were sceptical and even hostile from the start, early official reports were very cautious and doubtful in 1853 and frankly pessimistic by 1854, while even the missionaries, who were naturally the most enthusiastic, always had their qualifications to add. The failure of the rebellion to advance successfully beyond Nanking after 1853 and the reports of later Western visitors served to diminish, if not quite to destroy, the early hopes aroused that a quick victory for the rebels would advance British interests in China, and by the later eighteen fifties it had almost ceased to count in calculations about the future. The official consular view of it was especially hostile.

Insofar as there was any significant change in British opinion about 1860, it was as much in favour as against the rebels. They seemed suddenly to have recovered all their former military vigour, to show once again some possibility of religious reform, and to be in any case not worse than the untrustworthy Manchus, who were greatly suspect after the events of 1859-60. This reaction in favour of the rebels was much less general than in 1853, however, and had passed almost entirely by 1862, after further first-hand observation and experience of the movement. Nevertheless, disapproval of the rebellion was not the same thing as support for action against it. The outstanding feature of British opinion on

the question from 1862 to 1864 was the strength of the opposition to the government policy of intervention. The roots of this opposition spread very wide, reaching to politicians in England who grasped at any stick to use against the Palmerston government, to merchants in China who disliked the element of strengthening the central Peking government present in the official British policy, to a few, but a very few, who still believed that the Taipings were preferable to the Manchus. The policy of intervention against the Taiping rebellion was very much an official policy, not one urged upon the government by some powerful lobby, such as the opium interest.

Viewing the development of British attitudes and policy over the whole period of the rebellion then, there is no single, clearly marked turning point. Opinion fluctuated, though on the whole after 1853 the trend was fairly steadily away from support for the rebellion; while official policy, though not originally biassed in favour of the Manchus, soon became so, at first simply because what the British government chose to define as the defensible limits of British interests in China included Manchu interests also, and later from an avowed desire to advance a Manchu victory over the rebels. This policy of limited and pro-Manchu neutrality which developed during the eighteen fifties readily became one of

active and consistent support for the Peking government, once the British government was satisfied that the Manchus would observe the terms of the new treaty settlement and that the rebels could not be cajoled or bullied to keep away from the treaty ports. This was the situation by the beginning of 1862.

The British policy followed from that point was one of limited, not wholesale intervention. The idea that all the forces used to defeat the Manchus in 1860 were turned against the Taipings in 1862 is quite mistaken. They were simply not in China. Direct British action against the rebels, although of prime importance in preventing them from establishing a firm, new base in the coastal provinces at the mouth of the Yangtze, was confined to a relatively small area and a relatively short period of time. Indirect assistance given the Manchus, by the release of officers to lead Chinese forces and by the supplying of arms, was substantial, but hardly seems to have been as decisive as some have made it. It is important to see the British contribution to the defeat of the rebellion against the background of the over-all decline in Taiping military and political fortunes since 1853. In that decline the weaknesses of Taiping leadership and the slow pressure of the provincial Chinese armies directed by Tseng Kuo-fan appear of far greater importance than the exploits of

the Ever Victorious Army, though that army certainly helped to hasten the end considerably.

Finally, British policy towards the Taiping rebellion seems to me to illustrate the uncertainties and hesitations, rather than the cynical astuteness of British imperialism in nineteenth century China. The British government stumbled into action against the rebellion, was anxious not to get drawn too far into the struggle, and had half-formed but unrealised theories about using its aid to improve the quality of the Manchu government. It did not deliberately set out to suppress what it recognised to be a progressive, nationalist, anti-colonial rebellion in order to preserve a reactionary and conveniently weak government in China. In the light of later developments it is not surprising that the issue has been presented in such terms, especially by modern Chinese historians. But the choice the British government saw was between the break up of China and an admittedly weak, inefficient and untrustworthy government which it nevertheless hoped could, with encouragement, become one to which the protection of British interests might eventually be entrusted. British policy was, perhaps, based on a mistaken view of the real nature of the Taiping rebellion, as it was certainly based on motives of pure self interest. But despite superficial appearances, British policy towards the Taiping rebellion

in China does not provide a very convincing example of a cynically repressive imperialism at work. Too many assumptions, both about what the Taiping rebellion was capable of achieving in nineteenth century China and about the nature of British policy towards it, have to be made for such a view to be historically acceptable.

APPENDIX A

The Appointment of T. T. Meadows to Newchwang

Thomas Taylor Meadows was the chief, almost the sole defender of the Taiping rebellion among British consular officers in China, and was transferred from the key post of consul at Shanghai in 1861 to the newly opened treaty port of Newchwang in Manchuria, very far from the scene of the rebellion and the possibility of influencing British policy towards it. One naturally asks whether there was any connection between these facts. Was Meadows, in twentieth century terms, regarded as a bad security risk, and deliberately sent to a distant and inferior post as punishment for his unorthodox ideas on Chinese politics?

Writers holding very different views of the rebellion, as well as of Meadows himself, have certainly seen the matter in this light. Colonel Sykes, the chief spokesman for the rebels in the House of Commons, wrote that Meadows was "got rid of by accepting a post in Manchuria", while Montalto de Jesus, an historian of Shanghai who was very hostile to the rebellion and devoted to the memory of General Gordon, suggested that he was "relegated to a sphere where his blind Taiping partisanship could not be a source of misunderstanding as to the attitude of his own government

at Shanghai". A. E. Wilson, the historian of the Ever Victorious Army, put Meadows in a class on his own as a supporter of the rebels, "not to be confused with the rest of the Taiping sympathisers in China, or with Col. Sykes et hoc omne genus at home". But he too believed that Meadows had, at his own request, been "banished to the unimportant consulship at Newchwant". Whether sympathetically or not, all three agree that the chief reason for Meadows leaving Shanghai was his attitude towards the rebellion.(1)

There is certainly some evidence to support this theory. At the end of August, 1860, just after the first Taiping attack upon Shanghai, Bruce wrote to Elgin,

> "It is amusing to see the implicit faith reposed by Meadows &c. in these men. One would suppose a Chinaman with long hair incapable of telling a lie. Meadows as usual has been a great difficulty, and it was very fortunate, if the rebels were to be kept out of that town, that I was on the spot. He told Wyndham that he should have no hesitation in admitting them, and he certainly did everything he could to paralyze the measures necessary for defence, so much so that I directed Marchand Wynniatt never to apply to him but to come always to me. I hope that you

(1) See W.H.Sykes, The Taeping Rebellion in China..(1863) p64; C.A.Montato de Jesus, Historic Shanghai (1909) pp114-5; A.E.Wilson, The Ever Victorious Army (1868) pp312-13.

"will give me a pretext for sending him at once to the north, where he will be out of the way.... I never had to deal with so impracticable and mischievous a subordinate".(1)

If this were all the evidence available the case would seem clearly proved. Bruce did not get on with Meadows, thought his attitude to the rebellion positively dangerous, and was anxious to get him out of the way - so Meadows went to Manchuria.

There is, however, a good deal of other relevant evidence which blurs, and practically obliterates, this simple picture of bureaucratic victimisation. In the first place, Meadows' appointment to the Shanghai consulship, made in July, 1859, was temporary, his gazetted appointment even at that time being Newchwang. In January, 1859, there had been a general reshuffling of China appointments by the Foreign Office in anticipation of the ratification of the Treaty of Tientsin. As part of this Meadows was to go to the Manchurian port, Robertson was to leave Shanghai for Canton, Parkes, who had been Allied Commissioner at Canton during its occupation by French and English forces since January, 1858, was to take over the Shanghai post, while

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(1) F.O.228/281 Bruce to Elgin Aug.31,1860. Wyndham was attaché to the China Mission; Wynniatt possibly a military officer.

W. H. Medhusrt was to move from Foochow to Tangchow (Chefoo) on the Shantung peninsula.(1) With the renewal of hostilities after Bruce's repulse at the Taku forts these arrangements were, of course, upset. Robertson did go to Canton, but Parkes joined Elgin's second mission, and it was temporarily impossible to open the new ports in the north. Medhurst therefore remained at Foochow, while Meadows, who had returned to Shanghai as Interpreter at the end of 1858, was given "temporary charge" of the consulate after Robertson's departure, despite the vehement protests of Medhurst.(2) At that time Bruce probably thought Parkes would soon take up duties at Shanghai and that it was not worth disturbing arrangements at other consulates to fill a temporary gap there. In the event, Meadows stayed for nearly two years and, despite Bruce's strictures of August, 1860, did not actually move before his long appointed post at Newchwang was available. In short, one can quite satisfactorily explain Meadows' move from Shanghai to Newchwang in April, 1861, without reference to his views on the rebellion or his disagreements with Bruce. It was a long-anticipated move which was made at the first opportunity. This is not to

(1) F.O.17/311 Malmesbury to Bruce (no.6.) March 2,1859; also Foreign Office List, 1859.

(2) For Meadows' temporary appointment see F.O.17/313 Bruce to Russell, Aug.22,1859. Medhurst protested to strongly that Bruce asked him to withdraw his original letter and present his case in more moderate terms. Bruce nevertheless advised Russell that Medhurst's protests were unreasonable - see F.O.17/314 Bruce to Russell Sept.19, 1859.

deny that other factors were present, but the case for saying he was "got rid of" from Shanghai would be far stronger had he been moved immediately after August 1860, and not gone directly to Newchwang.

Another point is that Newchwang was certainly not regarded as an "unimportant consulship" in 1859 or in 1861, even though it later proved to be a backwater. It was hoped that it would become a major port for the development of trade with Manchuria, its potential importance being indicated by the fact that Meadows went there on a salary of £1,300 per annum, equal to that for Tangchow and considerably higher than those for the other new ports (e.g. Swatow £800; Chinkiang £900). It was inferior only to the major consulates of Shanghai (£1,500) and Canton (£1,600).(1) Meadows' appointment therefore cannot be regarded as in any sense "relegation". He was being moved from a temporary to a permanent consulship at a good salary. Moreover, he was certainly quite ready to go there, and for health reasons preferred it even to staying at Shanghai. As early as August, 1858, he had written asking for an appointment in the north, and in January, 1861, his preference for that area was still strong. On the latter occasion he wrote to Russell from Shanghai, in what

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(1) For salary scale see F.O.17/311 Malmesbury to Bruce (No.6) March 2, 1859; also F.O.17/322 F.O.to Treasury Feb.24,1859.

appears to have been quite gratuitous alarm lest Bruce suddenly order him, "not to my proper post at Newchwang, but to some port south of this, at none of which can I possibly live". He went on to write hopefully of the prospects of a considerable trade developing at his new post, and begged to repeat

> "that I think that in that cold region I could remain in active employ for the next three or four years, that I am not only willing but desirous of remaining there, with occasional leaves of a year and a half, for the next twenty years.... Should, however, the hon. Mr. Bruce, in making his arrangements, deem it best that I should be permanently appointed to this Shanghae Consulate I will not assert that I should not be able to pass one or two years here without leave, though I should have many misgivings about the first summer, and would certainly have to retire definitely from China long before twenty years more had elapsed".(1)

Meadows certainly did not feel that in going to Newchwang he was being banished to a remote frontier post, like some degraded Chinese official.

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(1) F.O.17/360 Meadows to Russell Jan.24, 1860; for Meadows' original request for a northern post see F.O.17/298 enc. in Bowring to Malmesbury Aug.6, 1858.

There was unconscious irony in Meadows' thought that Bruce, "in making his arrangements", might deem it best to leave him permanently at Shanghai, for Bruce assured Russell, "I am just as anxious to send him to Newchwang as he is to go there".(1) More than Meadows' dangerous thoughts on the rebellion were behind this continuing desire on Bruce's part to get him out of Shanghai, however. It had been Meadows' opposition to the Foreign Inspectorate of Customs and his readiness to express this at length and in public which first prompted Bruce, in July, 1860, to wish him heartily somewhere else; and it was this issue which seems to have rankled most with the Minister Plenipotentiary. In March, 1861, he complained to an official in the Foreign Office that Meadows "has made it a rule to thwart me in everything because I don't fall in with his theories about Customs houses".(2) This rather petulant sounding complaint was prompted by Meadows' remarkable behaviour in the matter of the resignation of his brother, J.A.T.Meadows, from the consular service in January 1861, an affair in which Meadows also incurred Foreign Office

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(1) F.O.17/350 Bruce to Russell March 10,1861.
(2) F.O.17/350 Bruce to Alston March 13, 1861. For other complaints by Bruce about Meadows' attitude to the customs question see F.O.17/315 Bruce to Russell Dec.5,1859; F.O.17/338 Bruce to Russell July 16,1860; F.O.17/339 Bruce to Alston Dec. 31,1860; for Meadows' views on the customs see also A & P 1859 Sess.2 (2571) pp194-203; North China Herald,July 7,1860; S.F.Wright, op.cit., pp136-7. As early as July 11,1860, Bruce wished Meadows out of Shanghai on this score. He then wrote to Elgin, "Meadows has succeeded in stirring up the community against the Customs house on the confiscation question, and has indulged

Concluded at foot of next page...

disapproval.(1) Bruce on more than one occasion also complained of Meadows' readiness to let the routine business of the consular office slide

> "while he occupies the time of himself and his assistants on despatches, many of which are unnecessary and most of which are too long. Much labor would be avoided, were he to confine himself to the work of his office. But he has a very speculative turn of mind, and is anxious to conform his practice to what he considers sound principle, rather than follow in the steps of his predecessors, or be guided by positive instructions. He does not sufficiently consider that amidst the anomalies of every kind that surround us in China the safe principle is to depart as little as possible from what is the received usage".(2)

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concluding (2) from previous page....
in observations for which Davies and Fitzroy (Customs house officials) have asked, and been refused, explanations. I wish you could send him to Newchwang, or take him away". (Elgin Correspondence - Broomhall). As Minister Plenipotentiary Bruce had been given discretionary authority to decide when the new appointments should be taken up (F.O. 17/311, asabove). Mr. J.Gerson has pointed out to me, however, that since Bruce did not succeed in exchanging treaty ratifications in 1859 he took the view that his powers were not fully operative, especially since Elgin had been appointed as Minister Extraordinary. Bruce therefore deferred to Elgin, even on matters of consular administration, while Elgin was reluctant to assert any authority in what he regarded as still Bruce's province. Each hung back out of respect for the position of the other, otherwise Meadows might well have been moved from Shanghai before the rebels ever attacked the port.

(1) this page.. For correspondence on J.A.T.Meadows' resignation see F.O.17/361 (the Meadows brokers to the F.O.), and

(2) next page continued at foot of next page....

The latter day historian is, of course, most impressed by just this characteristic in Meadows' approach to China, as revealed especially in his book The Chinese and their Rebellions. Yet from the administrative point of view he was certainly a troublesome if brilliant subordinate, much given to tedious word spinning. This fault, and his role (or suspected role) in the resignation of his brother, are not relevant to the question of his remaining or not at Shanghai, though they were significant contributory causes of Bruce's impatience with him. His attitude to the customs was relevant, however, for the presence of a consul opposed to the Foreign Inspectorate principle at that key port was all too likely to encourage the merchant opposition which Bruce and the Foreign Office wished to allay.

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continuing footnotes from previous page...

(1) F.O.17/348 Russell to Bruce June 26,1861, for F.O. disapproval.

(2) F.O.17/350 Bruce to Russell March 10,1861; cf.also F.O. 17/339 Bruce to Alston, Dec.31, 1860 - "The vice of the consular service in China is that the Consuls are much more apt to pass their time in writing speculative despatches on general questions which may figure in a blue-book, than in carrying out the routine businessof the Ports... They have been misled by Alcock's example. The man least bitten with the mania is Parkes - he throws all his energies into practical questions - the worst of all is Meadows, who by raising difficulties and objections, makes practical improvement impossible "For posttions so anomalous as ours in China, an international pedant is a bore and an obstacle". Bruce went on to complain especially of Meadows' attitude to the customs service.

There is, I think, no simple answer to the question posed. What is certain is that Meadows' attitude to the rebellion was not the immediate or the sole cause of his moving to Newchwang, and was, perhaps, not even a major cause. But it would be false to conclude that it had nothing to do with the move. It is noteworthy that when Meadows left Shanghai it was not to make room for Parkes, but for other temporary consuls, the first of whom was Medhurst. This indicates that the fact that the northern ports were, by April,1861, ready to be opened was no compelling reason for actually sending Meadows to Newchwang, since Medhurst did not go to Tangchow. Had Bruce been thoroughly satisfied with Meadows he could, presumably, have left him at Shanghai and sent Medhurst to his post. That he did not do so but was, on the contrary, anxious to see Meadows out of Shanghai was at least partly, but only partly, because of the Consul's views on the rebellion. Meadows died at Newchwang in 1868.

APPENDIX B

TRADE FIGURES 1850 - 70

1. British Trade at Shanghai 1850 - 6 (in $)

Source: "Abstracts on the Reports of Trade of the various countries and Places for the years 1856-7....." in A & P 1857 (session 2) vol.XXXVIII (2285) p.46.

YEAR	Exchange $	Imports (exc. Opium) Cotton	Wool	TOTAL	Exports Tea	Silk	TOTAL
1850	5/-	2,617,891	500,555	3,908,156	2,426,711	5,529,267	8,020,606
1851	5/-	3,685,891	421,608	4,564,424	5,593,958	5,963,764	11,598,168
1852	5/-	3,669,147	589,280	4,685,571	4,523,460	6,926,200	11,484,200
1853	6/6	3,136,200	443,122	3,939,848	5,243,123	8,071,763	13,344,892
1854	6/3	492,448	89,878	1,179,756	4,446,096	7,205,129	11,702,147
1855	6/5	1,747,152	275,490	3,497,895	7,939,763	11,395,500	19,963,763
1856	7/-	3,159,830	672,850	6,162,369	2,749,777	22,287,389	25,803,632

2. Total Foreign Trade at Shanghai 1857-63 (in Taels)

Source: "Commercial Reports of H.M.Consuls in China 1862-4" in A & P 1865 vol.LIII (3489) p.61.

Notes: (i) the tael was worth about 6/- to 6/8 at this time.

(ii) a memo in F.O.17/383 of July 28, 1862 estimated that 80% of the total trade at Shanghai about that time was in British hands.

2. (contd) Total Foreign Trade at Shanghai (in Taels) 413

Year ending Dec. 31st	Imports		Exports	Shipping		
	General	Opium		British	American	TOTAL
1857	15,863,393	14,252,514	33,344,435	302	61	633
1858	19,017,049	15,828,320	30,623,759	290	97	754
1859	20,635,130	15,397,850	36,670,606	376	177	926
1860	26,225,588	14,857,440	31,363,880	494	248	1,007
1861	33,702,614	12,138,232	28,238,733	810	359	1,806
1862	46,701,584	18,604,140	47,569,966	1,532	806	2,898
1863	61,704,099	20,251,406	38,485,465	1,790	820	3,400

3. Tea and Silk Exports from Shanghai 1850-8 (in £s)

Source: to 1856 as for No. 1 above, p.44; for 1857-8 see "Abstract of Reports...." in A & P 1861 (2896) p.17

Year	Tea		Silk	
	Lbs	value	bales	value
1850	26,999,870	1,006,114	14,402	1,311,612
1851	54,233,865	2,174,425	18,108	1,601,805
1852	46,732,036	2,174,608	26,216	1,928,120
1853	49,773,920	2,485,099	41,293	2,749,653
1854 (x)	36,123,600	1,796,459	43,120	2,714,049
1855	76,711,659	3,413,584	55,537	3,568,906
1856	42,871,433	1,647,012	91,924	7,714,906
1857	45,757,711	3,351,661	76,464	7,320,118
1858	45,465,702	2,774,394	72,729	5,541,416

(x) "British only known; there being no Customs House".

4. British Tea and Silk Imports from China 1859-70 (in £s)

Source: "Return for Each Year since 1858 of the value of Exports and Imports from and to the U.K. and India, China and Hong Kong..." in A & P 1871 vol.L (347) p.4.

Year	Tea		Silk	
	Quantity (lbs)	Computed value (£)	Quantity (lbs)	Computed value (£)
1859	71,916,833	5,528,660	3,310,036	3,179,241
1860	85,295,129	6,601,894	2,203,300	2,296,228
1861	92,145,365	6,499,542	2,766,643	2,360,987
1862	109,756,857	8,759,763	3,270,206	3,034,442
1863	129,439,857	10,051,803	1,696,602	1,627,223
1864	115,102,527	8,606,705	461,357	472,636
1865	112,782,845	9,326,536	136,653	172,626
1866	130,863,501	10,443,488	108,201	130,685
1867	117,551,978	9,179,216	40,016	49,807
1868	142,111,436	11,342,180	90,276	102,768
1869	126,482,613	9,229,212	272,348	319,185
1870	125,593,898	8,787,894	578,441	681,277

5. British Exports to China and Hong Kong (exc.Onium) 1850-70 (in£s)

Sources: i "Return of the Declared Annual Value of British Produce and Manufactures Exported to China and Hong Kong (1834-63)" in A & P 1864 vol XLii (281).

ii As above for No.4, p.4.

5. (contd) British Exports to China (exc. Opium) 1850-70
(in £s)

Year	Cotton Manufactures	Total Declared Value (£)
1850	-	1,574,145
1851	-	2,161,268
1852	-	2,503,599
1853	-	1,749,597
1854	-	1,000,716
1855	-	1,277,944
1856	-	2,216,123
1857	-	2,449,982
1858	-	2,876,447
1959	2,758,678	4,457,573
1860	3,160,105	5,318,036
1861	3,179,584	4,848,657
1862	1,276,688	3,137,342
1863	1,170,488	3,889,927
1864	2,011,167	4,711,478
1865	2,788,059	5,512,293
1866	4,420,610	7,477,091
1870	6,194,274	9,547,563

6. Opium Imports into China 1850 - 60

Source: H.B.Morse The International Relations of the Chinese Empire Vol.1, p.556

(Cf., however, the figures given in "Return of Opium Exported to China from Central India ...and Bengal" in A & P 1865 vol. XL (94) pp10-12).

6. (contd) Opium Imports into China 1850-60.

Year	Total Shipments from India (chests)	Estimated Consumption in China
1850	52,925	42,925
1851	55,561	44,561
1852	59,600	48,600
1853	66,574	54,574
1854	74,523	61,523
1855	78,354	65,354
1856	70,606	56,606
1857	72,385	60,385
1858	74,966	61,966
1859	75,822	62,822
1860	58,681	47,681

7. Revenue Derived from the Opium Trade by the British Government in India 1854 - 64.

Source: F.S.Turner British Opium Policy (1876) p.306.

Year	Net Opium Revenue (£s)	Gross Revenue (£s)
1854-5	3,333,602	28,959,822
1855-6	3,961,977	30,671,958
1856-7	3,860,389	31,415,559
1857-8	5,918,375	31,643,267
1858-9	5,346,391	35,965,018
1859-60	5,169,778	39,602,850
1860-1	5,758,292	42,728,601
1861-2	4,909,805	43,847,934
1862-3	6,199,198	44,801,686
1864-5	4,525,506	44,279,467

A P P E N D I X C

British Forces in China 1860-4

1. Military (Source - The Monthly Returns of British Troops in China, listed in the P.R.O. under W.O.17/ (vols 1723-7). The figures for Total Effective Strength are taken from the Proof Sheet in each return, those for Shanghai from the Distribution Sheet. The latter include (after Aug.1862) small garrisons stationed in towns near Shanghai - "Fahwah", "Naujaw", etc., and refer only to Rank and File).

DATE (1st of each month)	Total Effective Strength		Shanghai and Vicinity	Additional Notes
Jan.1860	5,757		-	)
Feb.	5,666		-	) All at Hong Kong and) Canton
March	6,128		-	)
April	7,456		?	c,2000 listed as "North of China"
May	16,909		?	5,268 " " Indian Troops
June	(no return)		?	
July	Sth China 4,673	Nth China 15,901	1,144	Shanghai listed as part of Nth China Command
Aug.	5,385	15,970	918	
Sept.	4,639	16,596	1,532	
Oct.	4,596	16,517	2,370	
Nov.	4,552	16,418	2,388	Sth China force included 2,862 Indian troops Nth China force included 4,381 Indian troops
Dec.	5,160	5,450	1,196	Nth China Proof Sheet shows over 10,000 transferred to India and England

DATE	Total Effective Strength		Shanghai and Vicinity	Additional Notes
	Sth China	Nth China		
Jan.1861	5,346	5,695	1,112	Sth China force included 2,806 Indian Troops Nth -do- 1,451 -do- Tientsin garrison was 3394 Taku -do- 346
Feb.	5,364	5,681	1,109)	cf. F.O.17/363 W.O. to F.O. April 20 gives Tientsin
March	5,940	5,610	1,098)	4,696 (inc. 3,663 British infantry and 364 Indian
April	5,943	5,527	1,095)	Cavalry - Fane's Horse) Shanghai 1,293 (Sikh regiment of 1222 with ½ a battery of artillery) Canton 2892 (inc.1434 Indian infantry) Hong Kong 2334(inc. 820 Indian infantry) Total 11,215 plus staff and commissariat.
May	5,938	4,940	(953)	)shown as "H.K. Canton &
June	4,835	5,111	(1,056)	) Shanghai".
July	5,443	4,329	(1,103)	689 (inc. 553 Indian) of Sth China force.listed as Shanghai; 414 of Nth China force as "H.K. Canton and Shanghai"
Aug.	5,429	4,232	(717)	683 of Sth China force listed as Shanghai etc.
Sept.	5,350	4,276	(722)	
Oct.	5,341	4,233	(707)	
Nov.	6,509		629	
Dec.	6,044		647	1,593 at Hong Kong 903 " Kowloon 1,839 " Tientsin 243 " Taku forts 251 " Japan

DATE	Total Effective Strength	Shanghai and Vicinity	Additional Notes
Jan.1862	5,395	645	
Feb.	5,365	749	
Mar.	5,342	703	
April	5,304	1,203	
May	5,260	2,150	Tientsin garrison was evacuated by May 24 - A&P(3104) p.42
June	5,224	2,046	
July	5,117	2,756	A&P (3104)p.25 gives 288 French at Shanghai and 250 at "Najaor".
Aug.	5,044	2,249	
Sept.	4,805	2,442	
Oct.	4,753	2,510	
Nov.	5,397	2,430	
Dec.	4,894	2,449	
Jan.1863	4,849	2,703	1,303 at Hong Kong; 246 at Taku
Feb.	4,793	2,671	cf. F.O. 17/401 W.O. table dated May 14, 1863.
Mar.	4,844	2,756	
April	4,831	2,633	
May	4,738	2,606	
June	4,673	2,836	
July	3,726	1,904	
Aug.	3,440	1,677	
Sept.	3,424	1,659	
Oct.	3,319	1,487	
Nov.	3,300	1,582	
Dec.	3,397	1,644	

DATE	Total Effective Strength	Shanghai and Vicinity	Additional Notes
Jan.1864	4,440	1,674	2,395 at Hong Kong; 113 at Taku.
Feb.	4,501	1,547	
Mar.	4,999	1,545	
April	4,464	1,654	
May	4,454	1,621	
June	4,441	1,434	
July	4,177	1,577	
Aug.	4,140	1,336	
Sept.	4,166	1,297	
Oct.	4,363	1,112	
Nov.	4,343	1,130	
Dec.	4,281	1,079	

2.
Naval (Source: For table, Grace Fox, British Admirals and Chinese Pirates (1940) p.195; for 1862 details, Hope to Secretary of Admiralty, March 15, 1862, in Adm 1/5790; see Fox.p.64-5 for map showing extent of the East India and China Association in this period).

DATE	No. of Ships	Total Complement
Mar.1851	20	3,189
1852	18	2,944
1853	22	3,554
1854	27	3,779
1855	23	3,826
1856	23	3,846

DATE	No. of Ships	Total Complement
March 1857	37	6,845
1858	71	11,388
1859	52	6,277
1860	65	7,561
1861	66	7,970
1862	38 (x)	4,017
1863	50	6,230
1864	50	6,586

(x) These comprised 1 Frigate, 17 Gunboats, 1 tender
3 paddle wheel vessels, 2 troopships, 1 receiving ship
4 screw driven sloops, 3 store ships, 1 hospital ship
4 despatch vessels, 1 survey vessel

and were based as follows -

5 in East Indian Waters (Trincomalee, Singapore, Moulmein)

2 at Hong Kong

5 at Shanghai

1 at each of Japan, Gulf of Pechili, Manilla, Swatow, Foochow, Amoy, Nanking, Chinkiang, Kiukiang, Ningpo, Taku, Newchwang, Chefoo

remainder (flagship, storeships etc) on general service.

APPENDIX D

Numbers of Protestant Missionaries in China

Sources: Tables and information in The Chinese Repository (Jan, 1847 pp 12-14; Jan.1849, pp48-54 and Aug.-Dec, 1851, p.513ff); Rev. G. Smith, Narrative of an Exploratory Visit to each of the Consular Cities of China .... 1844-6 (1847) pp 530-2; Anglo Chinese Calendar, 1854, pp84-6; List of Protestant Missionaries sent to the Chinese, compiled by S.W.Williams, July,1, 1855; Wm.Dean, The China Mission (1859)pp160-4; Directory of Protestant Missions in China, June 5,1866; A.Wylie, Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese (1867); ed.D.MacGillivray, A.Century of Protestant Missions in China (1907) - for figures 1867 - 1907.

DATE	British Missionaries		Total Protestant Missionaries		
	Numbers	Societies	Nos.	Societies	Converts
1843	8	1	25	8	
May 1846	11	3	40	15	
beg.of 1847	12	3	51		
end of 1848	24/26	4	71/73	15	
mid 1851	23	5	78		
Dec. 1853	29	6	79	17	
July 1855	30	6	90		
1858	33	6	107	24	
June 1866	53(1)	c.10	111(2)		c.1500-2000(3)
1867	-	-	124		c.5000(3)
1877	-	-	473		13305
1890	-	-	905		37287
1907	-	-	3445		178261

(1) also 35 "missionary ladies", mostly wives
(2) " 93 " " " "
(3) See D.Matheson Our Mission in China (1882 ed.)p.130; cf also Evangelical Christendom Sept.1863,pp418-20.

APPENDIX E

Consular Appointments in China 1850-64

Sources: Despatches in series F.O.17/- and F.O.228/- and in A & P. The Foreign Office List printed each year shows gazetted rather than actual appointments. The date of taking over the post, not of appointment, is shown here.

Foreign Secretary	Plenipotentiary	Shanghai Consul	Other Relevant Appointments
Palmerston (since July 1846)	Bonham (since April,1848)	Alcock (since Dec. 1846)	Bowring consul at Canton (since Dec. 1848) and Meadows Interpreter there.
Dec.26,1851 Granville			Jan.1852 Meadows to Shanghai as Interpreter
Feb.27,1852 Malmesbury			
	April,1852 Bowring (acting)		
Dec.28,1852 Russell			
Feb.21,1853 Clarendon	Feb.14, 1853 Bonham returns from leave		
			Dec.1853 Meadows begins sick leave.
	April,1854 Bowring		
		May 9,1855 Robertson	
			Dec.1856 Meadows returns from leave; goes to Ningpo as Vice-Consul.
			July 1857 Elgin arrives on first Special Mission to China
Feb.28,1858 Malmesbury			
		Jan.1859 (Parkes Gazetted)	
			Jan.1859 Elgin leaves China.

Foreign Secretary	Plenipotentiary	Shanghai Consul	other Relevant Appointments
			Feb.185- Rear-Admir. Hope appointed to command East India-China station
	May 2,1859 Bruce (Shanghai as H.Q)		
June 18, 1859 Russell			
		July 28, 1859 Meadows (actg)	
			June 1860 Elgin arrives on second Special Mission
	Nov.1860 Bruce moves to Tientsin		
			Jan,1861 Elgin leaves China
	March 1861 Bruce moves to Peking		
		Apl 20, 1861 Medhurst(actg)	Meadows to Newchwang.
			Feb.1862 Sir.J. Michel hands over as Military C.in C. in China to Brig. Gen.Staveley
			Nov.1862 Hope hands over to R.Admiral Kuper
		April 1, 1863 Harvey (actg)	March-April 1863 Maj.Gen.Brown succeeds Staveley as Military C.in C.
		June 9, 1863 Markham (actg)	Harvey on sick leave
		March 3,1864 Parkes	
	June 23,1864 (actg) Wade		Bruce on leave

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B I B L I O G R A P H Y

I. OFFICIAL PAPERS

1. British

For the development of British policy in China practically all the relevant official material is to be found in the bound series of Foreign Office papers, liste d as F.O.17/- and F.O.228/- at the Public Record Office, London. The first of these series contains the drafts (without enclosures) of Foreign Office despatchestto the Plenipotentiary in China, and the originals (with enclosures) of his despatches home. In addition, the volumes listed as "Domestic Various" contain the correspondence of the Foreign Office with other government departments and with private individuals on China affairs. The second series (F.O.228/-) contains the originals (with enclosures) of Foreign Office despatches to China, copies of the Plenipotentiary's despatches home, and despatches to the Plenipotentiary from the various consulates. From about 1860 a very large part of the material relevant to the Taiping rebellion in these series was printed in Parliamentary Papers, and where available I have referred to the printed rather than to the manuscript source.

(a) Manuscript.

Foreign Office

General Correspondence - China 1850 - 64.
Cited as F.O.17/-; Vols 165-417 used.

Consular and Embassy Archives - China 1850-64
Cited as F.O.228/-; Vols 113-360. (I have used chiefly the volumes containing the originals of F.O. despatches to China, and the volumes containing despatches from the Shanghai consulate).

Admiralty

In letters from the East India and China Station 1861-3. Cited as Adm 1/- ; bundles 5762, 5790, 5824 used. All the important Admiralty papers on policy developments in China, such as Rear-Admiral Hope's reports of his trips to Nanking, are in copied form in the F.O.series, and in many cases were also printed.

War Office

Monthly Returns of Troops Stationed in China, 1860-4.
Cited as W.O.17/- ; vols 1723-7. Other War Office correspondence on China is found in the Domestic Various volumes in the F.O.17/- series

India Office

Letters to India on Finances, 1860-4.
Financial Letters from India, 1860-3.
Home Correspondence: Political and Secret, 1860-4.
Consulted chiefly for signs of alarm at a possible loss of revenue from the opium trade.

(b) Printed

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (3rd Series) 1853-64.
Cited as P.D., volume, year and column.
House of Commons' Division Lists, 1862.
For details of the vote of July 8, 1862; used in conjunction with E.Walford's Shilling House of Commons (1862) to help establish the state of merchant opinion in the House of Commons on government policy.

Accounts and Papers -
The bound series of Parliamentary Papers.
Cited as A & P year, number of the paper, and the page within the paper itself (not within the volume as a whole). The chief papers used were:

Year	Volume in Bound series	Number	Title
1847	V	654	Report of Select Committee on Commercial Relations with China.
1852-3	LXIX	1667	Papers Respecting the Civil War in China.
1854	LXXII	1792	Correspondence Respecting the Attack on the Foreign Settlement at Shanghae.
1857	XII	2163	Papers Relating to the Proceedings of Her Majesty's Naval Forces at Canton.

Year	Volume in Bound series	Number	Title
1857	XII	2173	Correspondence Relative to Entrance into Canton,1850-5.
1857	XII	2175	Correspondence Respecting Insults in China.
1857(2)	XLIII	2221	Papers Relating to the Opium Trade in China, 1842-56.
1859(2)	XXXIII	2571	Correspondence Relative to the Earl of Elgin's Special Mission to China and Japan, 1857-9.
1861	LXVI	2754	Correspondence Respecting Affairs in China, 1859-60.
1861	LXVI	2777	Further Correspondence respecting affairs in China.
1861	LXVI	2840	Correspondence Respecting the Opening of the Yangtzekiang River to Foreign Trade.
1862	LXIII	2976	Papers Relating to the Rebellion in China and Trade in the Yangtze Keang River.
1862	LXIII	2992	Further Papers Relating to the Rebellion in China.
1862	LXIII	3057	Correspondence on the Employment of British Officers by the Government of China.
1862	LXIII	3058	Further Papers Relating to the Rebellion in China.
1863	LXXIII	2104	Further Papers Relating to the Rebellion in China.
1863	XXXV	341	Order in Council Authorising the Enlistment of Officers and Men and the Equipment and Fitting out of Vessels of War for the Service of the Emperior of China.

Year	Volume in Bound series	Number	T i t l e
1864	XLII	525	Copy of all Orders in Council at Present in Force (May 30, 1864) for the Punishment of Breaches of Neutrality by British Subjects in the Civil War Raging in China.
1864	LXIII	3271	Correspondence respecting..... the Anglo Chinese Fleet.
1864	LXIII	3295	Papers Relating to the Affairs of China.
1864	LXIII	3408	Correspondence Relative to Lieut.-Col. Gordon's Position in the Chinese Service after the fall of Soochow.

2. Non-British Official Papers

U.S.Congressional Papers:

Congress 33.1 House Executive Documents, vol.16, No.123 (Marshall Correspondence)

Congress 35.2 Senate Executive Documents, vols.8-9, No.22 (McLane and Parker Correspondence).

Congress 36.1 Senate Executive Documents, vol.10, No.30 (Reed and Ward Correspondence)

Ch'ing Tai Ch'ou Pan I Wu Shih Mo (Details of the Management of Barbarian Affairs in the Ch'ing Dynasty) (Peking 1930). Cited as IWSM, followed by initials of the reign period, chüan and page numbers. I have used Hsien Feng (H.F.), chüan 69-80 and Tung Chih (T.C.), chüan 1-27, covering the period Nov.1860 - Aug.1864.

China's Management of the American Barbarians (Yale, 1951). This consists mainly of translations by Earl Swisher, of Chinese memorials and edicts from the I Wu Shih Mo collection relating to American policy in China over the period 1841-61. There are, however, many extracts relating to British policy also, especially in Ch.5 on the joint Anglo-American attempt at Treaty Revision in 1854.

Treaties, Conventions etc. between China and Foreign States.
Printed by the Imperial Maritime Customs
(Shanghai 1907-8).

II. Private Papers

Elgin Papers (at India Office Library)
Cited as Elgin Correspondence (India Office).
This collection was still uncatalogued at the time of use. It consists of papers from Elgin's period asGovernor General in India, but some correspondence on affairs in China is to be found in it.

Elgin Papers (at Broomhall, Dumfermline, Fyffe, Scotland).
Cited as Elgin Correspondence (Broomhall).
Mr. J. Gerson was given access to these papers by the courtesy of Lord Bruce, and generously allowed me to examine the notes he made from them. They include a number of letters between Elgin and Bruce in 1860-1 which may be added to those to be found in F.O.228/281.

Letters and Journals of James, 8th Earl of Elgin
ed. T. Walrond (London 1872).
Printed selection of the Elgin Papers.

III Material on Merchant Opinion

Proceedings of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce (1839-67).
(at Manchester Public Library).
Little or nothing directly on the rebellion in China.

Reports of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce (1851-64).
(at Offices of Liverpool C. of C.)

Jardine Matheson and Co. Correspondence (at University Library, Cambridge)
Cited as J.M. & Co. A great mass of essentially business correspondence. Comments on political developments are most readily found in the Europe Letter Books (copies of letters to business correspondents, chiefly in England).

(For other scattered material on merchant opinion see references to Chapter VIII).

IV Material on Missionary Opinion

There is a considerable amount of material available in London, at the headquarters of the various missionary societies, on missionary activities in China, which would probably repay careful study. Extracts from reports were often printed in missionary publications, and provide a guide to the manuscript material.

1. Society Records and Publications

London Missionary Society:

Manuscript - Central China Letters, Boxes I - III (1843-66).
South China and Ultra-Ganges Letters, Boxes V - VI (1845-68).
North China Letters Box I (1860-6).

Outgoing Letters - China Boxes IV - V (1853 - 63).

Printed - Missionary Magazine and Chronicle (1843-65).

Church Missionary Society:

Manuscript - Letter Books - China 1851-9 and 1859-62. (1863-7 vol.missing)
China Letters (3 Boxes, arranged alphabetically by writers).
Bishop of Victoria's letters (1844-64).

Printed - Church Missionary Record (1844-65)

Church Missionary Intelligencer (1849-65).
Proceedings of the C.M.S. for Africa and the East (1852-65).
Circulars and Other Papers (Vols.I - II).

Presbyterian Missionary Society:

Manuscript - Letters Relating to the China Mission Box II (1855-62)

Printed - Reports of the China Mission at Amoy (1855-65).
The English Presbyterian Messenger (1853-64).

Methodist Missionary Society:

Printed - Reports of the Wesleyan Missionary Society (1853-64).
Wesleyan Missionary Notices (1853-64).

Baptist Missionary Society:

Printed - Reports of the Baptist Missionary Society (1853-64).
The Missionary Herald (1853-64).

Chinese Evangelization Society:

Printed - The Chinese Missionary Gleaner (1851-9).

2. Religious Press:

Chinese Evangelization Society's Press Cuttings (2 vols., now in the library of the L.M.S.).
The Christian Times 1853-4, 1860-4
Evangelical Christendom 1853-4, 1860-4.

3. Contemporary Publications Relating Especially to Missionary Work in China:

(Anon.) - The History of Christian Missions and of the Present Insurrection London 1853
(Anon.) - The Religious Precepts of the Taeping Dynasty. printed by W.Hewett & Co. London 1853.
Dean Wm.- The China Mission N.Y.1859

Edkins) - Chinese Scenes and Peoples (with
Jane) "Narrative of a Visit to Nanking" by Joseph Edkins) .. .. London 1863

Gillespie)-The Land of Sinim, or China and
Wm.) the Chinese Missions Edinburgh1854

James J.A.-God's Voice from China to the British Churches .. .. .. London 1858

John G. -The Chinese Rebellion (see above p.325) .. Canton 1861

Kesson J. -The Cross and the Dragon, or the Fortunes of Christianity in China (see above p.350-1) London 1854

Legge J.D. - The Land of Sinim ... . London 1859

Matheson-D. - Our Mission in China .. .. London 1882 (1st ed.1866)

Medhurst W.H. - The Connection between Foreign Missionaries and the Kwang-se Insurrection .. .. .. (Shanghai) 1853

Milne W.C. - Life in China .. .. .. London 1857

Moule A.E. - Personal Recollections of the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion, 1861-3 Shanghai 1884

Rule W.H. - The Religious Aspect of the Civil War in China (see above p. 312) .. .. .. London 1853

Taylor J.) Hudson) - China: Its Spiritual Needs and Claims .. .. .. London 1865

Smith G. - Narrative of an Exploratory Visit to each of the Consular Cities of China .. .. London 1847

Wylie A. - Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese Shanghai 1867

- Extract from a Journal of a Cruise up the Yangtze Keang. n.d.(1859)

4. <u>Later Publications on the Missionaries in China:</u>

Band E. - Working His Purpose Out: The History of the English Presbyterian Mission .. .. .. London 1948

Boardman E.P. - Christian Influence Upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion (Thorough study of Taiping Christianity) .. .. .. Wisconsin 1952

Canton Wm. - A History of the British and Foreign Bible Scty (volsII-II) London 1910

Findlay and) Holdsworth) - A History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Scty (Vol.V). London 1924

Foster J. - The Christian Origins of the Taiping Rebellion .. In International Review of Missions XL, 158 (Apr.1951) pp.156-67.

Latourette K.S. - A History of the Expansion of Christianity (Vol.VI - The Great Century in N.Africa and Asia 1800-1914) .. .. London n.d.

A History of Christian Missions in China N.York 1929

(His chapter on the rebellion gives a very telescoped summary of missionary opinion.)

Littell J.B. - Missionaries and Politics in China - the Taiping Rebellion (see above p.308 n.2) in Pol. Sce Quarterly XLIII, 4 (Dec.1928) pp566-99

Lovett R. - The History of the London Missionary Scty (Vol.II) London 1899

MacGillivray D.(ed) - A Century of Protestant Missions in China (1807-1907) .. .. .. Shanghai 1907

Michie A. — - China and Christianity The Political Obstacles to Missionary Success in China .. .. London 1901

Parker E.H. - China and Religion . .. London 1905

Schlyter H. - Karl Gützlaff: als missionar in China (Eng. summary pp.291-301) .. Copenhagen 1946

Stock E. - History of the Church Missionary Scty Vol. II .. .. London 1899

Thompson R.W. - Griffith John .. .. London 1907.

V. Newspapers and Periodicals

1. Newspapers:

Times 1850-64.

Morning Post 1853-4, 1860-3.

Daily News 1853-4, 1860-3

Economist 1853-64

Spectator 1853-64

Standard 1853.

Manchester Guardian 1863.

London and China Express 1858-64

China Mail 1845-58, 1863-4.

Overland China Mail 1858-61

Overland Register and Prices Current 1853-4, 1860-1.

China Overland Trade Report 1860-4.

Times of India 1862-3.

Friend of India 1853-4, 1859.

Newspaper Cuttings on China 1847-59 (2 volumes in the Library of the London Missionary Society).

2. Articles in Periodicals

(See also Poole's Index to Periodical Literature, 1802-81. Known or probable authors are put in brackets after the title of the article; For comments on the articles see Ch.X above).

Athenaeum 1853-62 (various book reviews).

Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine.

July 1852.. The Celestials at Home and Abroad

Jan 1854 .. The Past and Future of China.

April 1860. Our Position in China (Sherard Osborn)

Jan.1863 .. Progress in China (H.N.Lay)

Feb.1863 .. The Taepings and their Remedy (H.N.Lay)

Dec.1866 .. Foreign Interference with the Taipings (A.E.Wilson)

Bombay Quarterly Review

Oct. 1855 .. The Chinese Empire and its Destinies (R.Alcock)

April 1856.. The Chinese Empire in its Foreign Relations (R.Alcock)

British Journal

Oct. 1853 .. The War in China

British Quarterly Review

July 1855 .. The Insurgent Power in China

April 1861.. (Review article based on Meadows, Huc, Fortune Oliphant etc.)

Calcutta Review

March 1854.. Recent Events in China (G.Smith, Bishop of Victoria).

Chambers Edinburgh Journal

Sept.1853 .. The Rebellion in China

Cornhill Magazine

Jan.1860 .. The Chinese and the "Outer Barbarians". (Bowring?)

Nov.1864 .. Colonel Gordon's Exploits in China.

Dublin University Magazine

May 1861 .. China.

Edinburgh Review

April 1855 .. M.Huc's Travels in China

April 1857 .. British Relations with China

Jan.1860 .. Lord Elgin's Mission to China and Japan.

Eclectic Review

Dec. 1856 .. (review of Meadows' The Chinese and their Rebellions).

Frasers Magazine

Nov.1853 .. The Insurrection in China

(Vol.7) 1865 Rebellion, Diplomacy and Progress in China.

London Quarterly Review

April 1861 .. The Chinese Insurgents and Our Policy towards them.

July 1863 .. The Taiping Rebellion in China

(Colburn's) New Monthly Magazine

Sept-Dec.1853 The Chinese Revolution

Dec. 1859 .. China

Quarterly Review

Dec. 1853 .. Religion of the Chinese Rebels

Jan.1860 .. China and the War

Oct. 1862 .. The Taeping Rebellion

Taits Edinburgh Magazine

Oct 1860 .. The Christian Revolution in China (Scarth?)

Westminster Review

April 1858 .. China: Past and Present.

VI. Other Contemporary and Near-Contemporary Material:

(Anon)	A History of China to the Present Time, Including an Account of the Rise and Progress of the Present Religious Insurrection in that Country (in Bentley's Parlour Bookcase Series).	London 1854
Alcock R.	The Capital of the Tycoon (Vol.I)	London 1863
Blakiston J.W.	Five Months on the Yangtze.. and Notices of the Present Rebellion in China	London 1862
Bowring J.	Autobiographical Recollections.	London 1877
Brine L.	The Taeping Rebellion in China, (A Solid and balanced study, the least partial of contemporary British accounts).	London 1862
Callery and Yvan (trans. J.Oxenford)	History of the Insurrection in China	London 1853
	The Chinese Repository (1843-51)	Canton
	The Chinese and Japanese Repository (1863-4)	London
Cooke G.Wingrove	China in 1857-8	London 1858
deCourcy R.	L'Insurrection Chinoise (Pro-rebel account which reflects the prevailing suspicion of the Manchu government early in 1861.)	in Revue des deux mondes July,1861,pp 5-36, 312-60.
Davis J.F.	China..1857	London 1857
Fishbourne E.G.	Impressions of China and the Present Revolution (see above pp)	London 1855
Fisher A.A.C.	Personal Narrative of Three Years Service in China	London 1863
Forrest R.J.	The Christianity of Hung Tsue-tsuen (Hung Hsui-chüan). (see above pp.154-5).	In Journal of the N.China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Scty Dec.1867, p.187.

Fortune R.	A Residence among the Chinese (1853-6)	London 1857
Giquel P.	La Politique Francaise en Chine depuis les traités de 1858 et de 1860	Paris 1872
Laing S.	England's Mission in the Far East (see above pp.240,253)	London 186
Lay H.N.	Our Interests in China	London 186
Lindley A.F. ("Lin-le")	Ti-ping Tien-kwoh .. .. (The American missionary-historian S. Wells Williams described this as "a rather untrustworthy record", and A.E.Wilson also criticised it severely in his "Ever Victorious Army"; yet Lindley made very full and sometimes very telling use of Parliamentary Papers to attack British policy towards the rebellion. But I think he takes a much too conspiratorial view of that policy, suspecting secret government orders and deliberate provocation of the rebels by British officials in China where there is little or no real evidence to show this. His very favourable view of the rebel movement is not supported by any other contemporary British observer after 1861, and is perhaps partly explained by the fact that he associated chiefly with the Chung Wang's forces. It is a vigorous, sometimes brilliant, and very partisan book).	London 1866
Macfarlane C.	The Chinese Revolution	London 1853
Mackie J.M.	The Life of Tai Ping Wang	N.York 1857
Martin W.A.P.	A Cycle of Cathay	Edinburgh & London 1896
Meadows T.T.	Desultory Notes on the Government and People of China	London 1847
Michie A.	The Chinese and their Rebellions . (see above pp 154n and 363-5)	London 1856
Michie A.	The Englishman in China . .. .. (Life of Sir R.Alcock)	Edinburgh & London 1900
Oliphant L.	Narrative of the Earl of Elgin's Mission to China and Japan in 1857-8	Edinburgh & London 1858

Osborn S.	The Past and Future of Our Relations with China	London 1860
Scarth J.	Twelve Years in China	Edinburgh 1860.
	British Policy in China	Edinburgh 1861
	(Strong criticism of British policy towards the rebellion by an ex-China merchant, who seems to have greatly influenced the views of Col. W. H. Sykes)	
Sykes W.H.	The Taeping Rebellion in China (see above p.375)	London 1863
des Varannes M.A.	La Chine depuis le traité de Pekin-) Les Anglo Francais, les Imperiaux) et les Taipings) (Approves intervention as transforming Western relations with the Manchu government)	in Revue des deux mondes April,1863 pp 857-95.
(Vizetelly H.)	The Chinese Revolution .. .. (see above p.343 n.1.)	London 185 3
Wilson A.E.	England's Policy in China . ..	Hong Kong 1860
	The Ever Victorious Army . ..	London 1868
	(A more reasonable assessment of the role of this force in the defeat of the rebellion than that given in many later studies).	
Wolseley G.J.	Narrative of the War with China in 1860	London 1862

VII Later Material

Allen B.M.	Gordon in China .. .. .. (About the best of the many Gordon biographies)	London 1933
Bain C.A.	Commodore Perry, Humphrey Marshall and the Taiping Rebellion.	in Far Eastern Quarterly, Vol.X,3 (May 1951) pp358-70
Bales W.L.	Tso Tsung-t'ang	Shanghai 1937.

Banister T.R.	A History of the External Trade of China, 1834-81	Shanghai 1931
Baranovsky M.	Amerikano-anglyskie kapitalistui dushiteli Taipinskogo vosstaniya. (Anglo-American Capitalists - the stiflers of the Taping Uprising - translated for me by Mr. J.Lust). (Everything fitted into a few well-worn categories)	in Voprosui Historii (Jan. 1952 pp106-25
Beatty C.	His Country was the World	London 1954
Boulger D.C.	A Short History of China	London 1893
	The Life of Gordon	London 1896
	The Life of Sir Halliday Macartney	London 1908
	(The history of the Taiping rebellion becomes virtually the history of the campaigns of the Ever Victorious Army in these works)	
Cady J.F.	The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia .. .. (Extensive study, but not always reliable in detail).	N.York 1954
Cahill, Holger	A Yankee Adventurer . .. . (An attempt to recapture some of the limelight for F.T.Ward from Gordon. Rather pro-Taiping in some ways.)	N.York 1930
Chang Chien-fu	Chung-kuo chin pai-nien shih chiao ch'eng. (A textbook of Chinese History over the last 100 years)	Hong Kong 1949
Chao Tang-li	Anglo Chinese Diplomatic Relations 1858-70	Ph.D.Thesis, University of London, 1956
Chesneaux J.	La Revolution Taiping d'après quelques travaux récents. (valuable summary article)	Revue Historique t.209(1953) pp.33-57

Chiang Pei-huan	Anglo Chinese Diplomatic Relations, 1856-60	Ph.D.Thesis University of London,1939.
Chiang Ting-fu (T.F.Tsiang)	Chung-kuo chin-tai shih (A modern history of China)	Hong Kong 1954
Cordier H.	L'Expedition de Chine (2 vols)	Paris 1905-6
	Histoire des relations de la Chine avec les Puissances Occidentales, 1860-1900 (t.1.)	Paris 1901
Costin W.C.	Gt.Britain and China,1833-60 (Very thorough summary of the official material on British policy in these years)	Oxford 1937
Cranston E.	Shanghai in the Taiping Period	in Pacific Historical Review Vol.V (1936)pp147-60
	Rise and Decline of Occidental Intervention in China. (both very general studies).	in Pacific Historical Review Vol.XII (1943 pp23-32
Davies W.	British Diplomatic Relations with China, 1854-69 .. .. .. (The most thorough of several theses covering this period generally).	M.A.Thesis, University of Wales (Swansea) 1939.
Dennett T.	Americans in East Asia .. .. (Valuable though dated summary of American policy).	New York 1922
Eberhard W.	A History of China	London 1950.
Elton, Lord	General Gordon	London 1954
Fairbank J.K.	The Manchu Appeasement Policy	in Journal of the American Oriental Scty vol.59 (1939) pp469-84
	Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast .. .. (Invaluable on background up to 1854)	Harvard 1953
	Meadows on China	in Far Eastern Quarterly vol. 14,3 (May 1955) pp.365-71

Fan Wen-lan T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo yün-tung (The Taiping movement) Peking 1949

Fan Wen-lan (ed) T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo ko-ming yün-tung lun-wen chi (Collected essays on the Taiping revolutionary movement) .. .. .. Peking 1951
(These two works provide the best short statement of the Chinese Marxist interpretation of the rebellion).

Fitzgerald C.P. China: A Short Cultural History London 1950

Revolution in China .. .. .. London 1952

Fox Grace British Admirals and Chinese Pirates .. .. London 1940

Hail W.J. Tseng Kuo-fan and the Taiping Rebellion (Important corrective to earlier Western accounts) Yale-Oxford 1927

Hake H.E. The Story of Chinese Gordon .. London 1884

Hertslet E. Recollections of the Old Foreign Office .. .. London 1901

Hsiao I-shan Ch'ing tai t'ung shih (vol IV) (History of the Ch'ing dynasty) Shanghai 1932

Ch'ing shih (Ch'ing history) Taipei 1955
(Leading Nationalist Chinese historian, who gives little emphasis to Western intervention in defeat of the rebellion).

Hsia Ching-lin Studies in Chinese Diplomatic History .. ..Shanghai 1926

Hsieh Hsing-yao T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo shih-shih lün-tsung (Collection of essays on Taiping history) .. .. .. Shanghai 1935
T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo ts'ung-shu shih-san chung. (Thirteen collected works on the Taipings) - 1938.

Huang Ta-shou Chung-kuo chin-tai shih (vol.I) (A modern history of China) Taipei 1953

Hummel A.W. (ed) — Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Dynasty .. .. .. — Washington 1943

Hu Sheng — Imperialism and Chinese Politics (Very tendentious use of the evidence). — Peking 1955

Hughes E.R. — The Invasion of China by the Western World .. .. — London 1937

Leger F. — Les influences Occidentales dans la Révolution de l'Orient — Paris 1955

Levenson J.R. — Western Powers and Chinese Revolutions: the Pattern of Intervention .. .. — in Pacific Affairs vol.26,3 (Sept.1953) pp230-6.

Li Chien-nung — A Political History of China, 1840-1928 (translated by Teng Ssu-yü and J.Ingalls) .. .. — Princeton 1956

Linebarger P.M.A. et.al. — Far Eastern Government and Politics .. .. — N.York 1954

Lo Erh-kang — T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo shih kang. (An outline history of the Taipings). .. .. — Shanghai 1948 (1st ed.1937)

T'ai-p'ing t'ien-kuo shih kao — Peking 1955. (The earlier and shorter work seems to me to provide a more critical and balanced assessment of the rebellion. The section on the foreign relations of the rebels in the later work ranges from close and well documented arguments to sweeping assertions which seem to have no basis in fact. Lo's account of the role of the Western powers in 19th century China, like Hu Sheng's, illustrates Croce's distum that "all history is contemporary history", in extreme form).

Mason Mary G. — Western Concepts of China and the Chinese .. .. N.York 1939
(Disappointing despite the title. Drifts into a narrative of the rebellion instead of Western reactions to it, and has no bibliography).

Maybon and Fredet — Histoire de la Concession Francaise de Changhai .. .. Paris 1929

Michael F. — Military Organisation and Power Structure of China During the Taiping Rebellion) in Pacific Historical Review Vol.18, (1949) pp469-83.

Montalto de Jesus — Historic Shanghai .. .. Shanghai 1909.

Morse H.B. — The International Relations of the Chinese Empire - vol.I The Period of Conflict (1834-60) London 1910
Vol.II The period of Submission (1861-93) London 1918

Morse and McNair — Far Eastern International Relations .. .. .. Cambridge (Mass.) 1931

Owen D.E. — British Opium Policy in China and India .. .. .. Yale 1934

Pannikar K.M. — Asia and Western Dominance .. .. London 1953

Pelcovits N. — Old China Hands and the Foreign Office .. .. .. N.York 1948
(Illuminates the falsity of the assumption that British policy in China was always modelled to the demands of British merchants).

Rawlinson J.L. — The Lay Osborn Flotilla: its Development and Significance) in Papers on China 4 (1950) pp.58-93 (mimeograph by Far East Dept of University of Harvard, U.S.A.)

Redford A. — Manchester Merchants and Foreign Trade, 1794-1858 .. .. Manchester 1934

Rénouvin P. — La Question d'Extrême Orient Paris 1946

Roy M.N. — Revolution and Counter-Revolution in China. (A highly individualist Marxist view) ... Calcutta 1946

Rumbold H. — Recollections of a Diplomatist London 1902

Sargent A.J. — Anglo Chinese Commerce and Diplomacy .. .. .. Oxford 1907

Shen Lien-chih — Rôle des General C.G.Gordon dans la répression de l'Insurrection des Thai Phing .. .. .. Paris 1933

Shih V.Y.C. — The Ideology of the Taiping Tienkuo) in Sinologica vol.3 (1953) pp 1-15.

Some Chinese Rebel Ideologies in T'oung Pao vol.14 (1956) pp.150-226

(Both articles setting the rebellion firmly in the Chinese tradition of peasant uprisings).

Soothill W.E. — China and the West .. .. .. Oxford 1925

Steîle C.C. — Ideologies of the Taiping Insurrection in Chinese Social & Political Science Review XX,1 (Apr.1936) pp140-9.

Taylor G.E. — The Taiping Rebellion .. .. (Still valuable pilot article reassessing the rebellion for Western scholars). In Chinese Social & Pol.Science Review XVI,4 (Jan. 1933)pp545-61 4

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